

Communicating Images: A Narrative Based
Approach to the Process of Writing
(A Curriculum Design)

A Dissertation
Presented to
The School of Graduate Studies
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Arts

by
Joyce D. Shaffer
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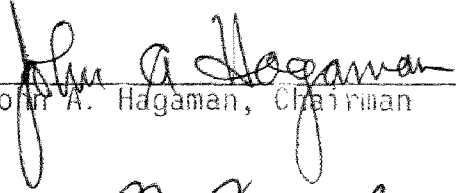
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An Abstract of a Dissertation by
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September, 1979
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This dissertation consists essentially of an explication of a curriculum design for an introductory composition course at the high school or college level. The design was developed by the writer over a ten year period and has been used in its present form in college classrooms for four consecutive years.

The practical aspects of the design are supported by carefully explored theoretical underpinnings from the discipline of rhetoric and the fields of composition, curriculum, and the psychology of learning. The design presents a synthesis of intellectual understandings and teaching experience which, while it defines no new theory, makes rational order of fragments of accepted theory and practice which were heretofore unorganized for the classroom teacher.

The writer begins by addressing the pervasive problems facing composition teachers who seek success in their work:

1. Confusion resulting from misunderstanding of the relationship between the composing process and the algorithms of form imposed upon the products of that process.
2. Confusion regarding the roles of teacher and learner in the composition classroom.
3. A lost connection between the learner as thinker and the learner as writer.
4. Misunderstandings regarding the meaning and importance of sequence and cumulative build in composition curricula.
5. Confusion regarding the purposes and reasonable expectations held for introductory composition courses, particularly at the college level.

From an ordering of these confusions, the writer draws three precepts which are the bases of the design presented.

1. Human beings need to find meaning in their lives and need to express the meaning that they find. These needs are the basis for the creative impulses of all humans, and are the context in which the composing process is realized.
2. The composing process is the structuring reality of rhetoric, the parent discipline from which composition derives. People learn to write by interacting with the composing process; they learn to write by writing.
3. The successful application of the composing process depends upon having something to say and knowing how to say it. A helpful composition curriculum must attend both to the structure of the discipline/process to be learned and the learners who attempt to master that discipline/process as a means to expression of personal meanings.

From the precepts follows an examination of the design itself, outlining the structure and sequence of the curriculum, making clear at the same time the relationships between theory available and practices described. Interwoven in the description are a rota of assignments, samples of student writing, and thorough discussion of evaluative procedures. The beginning assignments deal with the learning of narrative techniques because the writer believes narration is the most natural form of expression and because the sensory details of narration are especially important to personalized exposition.

I will write it all down, go back as far as I have to, and try to make some sense out of it. But I'm not a writer. I teach composition, but as anyone who's ever taken a comp course knows, you don't have to know anything about writing to teach it. In fact, the less you know the better because then you can go by rules, whereas if you really know how to write, rules about leading sentences and paragraphs and so forth don't exist. Writing is hard for me. The best I can do is put down bits and pieces, fragments of time, fragments of lives.

Marilyn French
The Women's Room

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Introduction

A Beginning: In Search of Historical Roots

This writer began her work toward a Doctor of Arts degree knowing that her area of focus would be the teaching of composition. She was an experienced teacher, but the link between contemporary composition courses and the classical discipline of rhetoric was undefined by her experience. She carried with her, in the beginning of her study, bits and pieces of a notion of rhetoric: A man scribbles off a poem in a country churchyard and that's rhetoric. A slick used car salesman persuades a person to buy a lemon...and that's rhetoric. An ancient philosopher splits the world into a series of dichotomies...and that's rhetoric. Samuel Johnson painstakingly compiles a dictionary; a young female debater wears a short skirt while arguing her proposition; a famous critic "recollects thoughts in tranquility"; a fanatical dictator gives a frenzied speech...and it's all rhetoric. Lurking in the recesses of her mind was the pejorative connotation, beware of rhetoric.

There is a rhetorical tradition that fostered the negative connotation she was carrying, sophistic rhetoric which manipulated language without regard for truth and logic. Plato countered the negative use of manipulation by stressing the quality of

the good man adhering to truth and virtue. Aristotelian rhetoric, systematized and based on a philosophic foundation, utilized deductive logic and became a basic discipline.

For Aristotle, a master of rhetoric had "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."¹ In the Rhetoric, he discussed in detail the values of rhetoric, the sorts of persuasion, and the lines of argument. Later rhetoricians placed emphasis on three arts for presenting a persuasive discourse: invention, arrangement, and style.

Cicero, modifying the Aristotelian rhetoric, defined invention as "the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible."² He distinguished extrinsic arguments and intrinsic arguments, the latter which could be discovered by means of a system of topoi (e.g. definition, comparison and contrast, cause and effect). The art of arrangement, patterns for organizing materials, was seen by Cicero as having six parts: the exordium, the narrative, the partition, the confirmation, the refutation, and the peroration. The parts themselves suggest a piece of persuasive discourse.

¹ Aristotle, Rhetoric, i2. 1355b 26-27, trans. W.D. Ross, in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 1329.

² Cicero, De Inventione, as quoted in Wilbur S. Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956), p.66.

The third art of style was a recognition of the fact that no one is persuaded by logic alone. So the classical rhetorician became concerned with how a piece of discourse was delivered in terms of the force and beauty of language, especially as the language reflected the character of the speaker.

Richard E. Young and Alton L. Becker, who along with Kenneth Pike are associated with a movement in rhetoric which developed from a linguistic theory called tagmemics, in their article, "Toward A Modern Theory of Rhetoric: A Tagmemic Contribution," have identified four major problems that make the "classical art of rhetoric...inadequate for our time."

First, the classical art of invention stresses authoritative confirmation of present beliefs, while modern modes of inquiry stress imaginative discovery of new facts and relationships. Second, the art of arrangement includes only patterns of persuasion, and neglects considerations of form in other important rhetorical modes such as description, narration, and exposition. Third, both the art of arrangement and art of style divorce form from content, failing to consider the importance of the art of discovery in the shaping of form. And finally, the art of style is concerned primarily with embellishing, clarifying, and giving point to sentences, an approach which neglects both the deeper personal roots of style and the ways in which style is manifested in patterns beyond the sentences.

Aristotle's description of a rhetorician includes the word "observing," which suggests a fifth major problem that makes

³ Richard E. Young and Alton L. Becker, "Toward A Modern Theory of Rhetoric: A Tagmemic Contribution," in Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings, ed. W. Ross Winterowd (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975), p. 129.

classical rhetoric inadequate as the primary basis for composition. Classical rhetoric was comprised of descriptions drawn from observations of orators in practice; it is the composition textbook writer who often uses the descriptions as prescriptions. Prescription refers to the textbook writer's attempt to analyze the written products of others, to create formulas by which writing types and forms of presentation seemingly can be designated, to draw absolute conclusions as to what writing is and how it is used. James E. Miller, Jr. states that definitions of writing are usually arbitrary and artificial, for absolute conclusions based on definitions deny writing the generative power inherent in it.⁴ Ross Winterowd is less gentle with his words: "Writing according to formula is hack writing -- which is exactly what most essays in composition classes are."⁵

Bruce, a college freshman, phrased the problems with prescription most eloquently. He used a narrow definition of rhetoric, but then perhaps his years in English classes taught him that definition.

Speaking Rhetorically about English

Since this class started in January, I have learned much. I have learned how to avoid being called on in the classroom, how to feign intelligence in the face of

⁴ James E. Miller, Jr., Word, Self, Reality (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1973), p.3.

⁵ W. Ross Winterowd, ed., Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 14.

my fellow students, and most important, I have learned something about myself. I have learned that I am not as interested in writing as I had previously fooled myself into thinking.

Writing, like prepared speech, is only a form of communication. Within that format, there are forms of that form, then other forms of that form and so on and so on...some work better than others, some bomb out entirely. It all depends on whom you are talking (or writing) to or about. It also depends on what you are trying to communicate.

I, personally, at least in the professional sense, am trying to learn to communicate to others about philosophy. I have reasons for wanting to do this, but they are irrelevant. Irrelevant in terms of rhetoric, not purpose, according to my beliefs. Rhetoric, as a subject for discussion by itself, is, in my opinion, irrelevant to its own purpose. Rhetorical study of anything is senseless. It's something similar to studying a hammer when you want only to drive a nail. The purpose of the hammer is not only obvious, but to study it or spend any time on it instead of the nail going into the wood, is absurd. The nail has to wait...the purpose of the whole process is being mislaid.

What I'm getting at is that my purpose is communicating philosophy to others for better living -- it's the nail. I have a tool for communicating which is called rhetoric -- the hammer. To be successful, I must drive the nail with the hammer. But if I spend all my time studying the hammer, nothing gets accomplished; my purpose in life (in that aspect) remains unfulfilled, at least until I break myself away from that rhetorical hammer.

Now, I'm not trying to propose elimination of the rhetoric curriculum from the schools. I believe that one should learn how to use the hammer, or to even know that the hammer is available. But to lay the entire foundation of one's major field of study on the hammer, is, as I said before, absurd. If you spend all your time with the hammer, you may forget, or worse yet, fail to even discover the nail.

So let's redefine our purposes. Let's find that nail first. Then we will work on slamming it into whatever or whomever we desire; then we will study the hammer, but only in its application to the nail's purpose.

Chapter I: Statement of the Problem

Classical Past/Present Confusions

Because composition textbook writers are still dependent upon descriptive definitions (Bruce would call them hammers) that are several centuries old, teachers of composition can easily find themselves placing emphasis on defining form rather than seeking clues within themselves and within their students to the generative process of writing. When form alone dominates the study of writing, it is not surprising to find introductory composition offerings tagged as "service courses," indicating that composition has no worthy content of its own.

In order to live up to the expectations of a "how-to" curriculum, teachers spend a great deal of class time talking about ways to present someone else's content. Lectures center upon induction; deduction; five nuances of diction; construction of the sentence, the paragraph, and the 750 word essay; a thesis statement (underlined, of course, so it can be identified); the development of supporting examples and the summarizing sentence. The assumption is if students can write sentences, combine sentences into paragraphs, and combine paragraphs into an essay, they will be writers.

Students say they don't know what to write about within the confines of the paragraphs, so teachers either assign topics and/or utilize textbooks that have sections of professional essays that will suggest the topics, or worse yet, let discussions of the readings become the primary emphasis of their courses. For all this trouble, most student products are the same dull stuff on gun control, abortion, and euthanasia because these topics lead to application of familiar categories: definition, contrast and comparison, cause and effect. The categories themselves are not equal to written products. There is no such thing as a definition paper, a contrast and comparison paper, a cause and effect paper. There are processes of defining, contrasting and comparing, finding causes and effects that may be steps in making an overall expression of thought in writing a paper. When students have not chosen their own content by determining what aspects of an issue or an event that they care to comment on, topoi will take precedence over the topic, as how a paper is written becomes more important than what is written about.

Students who have done much reading are many times better writers than those who have not read in depth and breadth, but it is not because they have lifted their topics from their reading, or because they have consciously patterned their

writing after that of professional authors. Only the students know what they want to say; assigned topics rob them of authentic commitment to content. Students have voices of their own; being asked to pattern their writing after that of professional authors robs them of the chance to develop their personal styles.

Just as the classical rhetorician's approach to style was one of "embellishing, clarifying, and giving point to sentences," so the modern composition teacher centers upon the production of an effective sentence, "effective" coming to mean grammatically and mechanically accurate rather than a reflection of clear thinking presented in a forceful way, couched in beautiful language. Grammatical/mechanical skills used for no purpose of the student's own, except to fulfill a teacher's assignment, become meaningless. The fulfilling of the assignment means to students the cranking out of a series of products, and revision of those products comes to mean the fixing of errors, not the rethinking that is reflected in rewriting.

The classical rhetoricians were not culprits; their beginnings were lucid ones within their context. Refinements of their definitions were not empty exercises; they reflected concern for defining the role of written communication in the world of discourse. The current intellectual demand for synthesizing a new rhetoric does not suggest dumping what has evolved

from classical tradition, but the demand has led composition scholars to delineate theories and to suggest writing activities, exercises, and paper assignments that have too often been packaged as theory standing alone or solely as day-to-day classroom operations.

There is no reason to have one in exclusion of the other. There is no need to throw away the old or to think that there is something brand new. What there can be is a meaningful organization of the pieces.

There is no agreed upon modern definition of rhetoric. There are no set answers as to what is the domain of rhetoric or what its purpose is as a field of study. Young, Becker, and Pike are key contemporary scholars who believe that "the discipline of rhetoric is primarily concerned with the control of a process and that mastering rhetoric means not only mastering a theory of how and why one communicates but mastering the process of communication as well."¹

This curriculum design is an attempt to structure a course that makes use of the composing process of a writer as implied

¹ Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker and Kenneth L. Pike, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970), p.9.

by Young, Becker, and Pike's umbrella definition of rhetoric. As the three authors put it, "The writer does at various times shift his attention from his experience and his own resources to his audience and to the written work itself; these shifts of attention and activity constitute the rhetorical process for the writer."²

If the rhetorical process for any communicator in any form, using any technique is a persuasive process, present confusions cannot be blamed on the classical roots of rhetoric. A major source of confusion is the prevalent persistence of defining persuasion only within the expository framework meaning to convince linked with the use of argument as the means of proof. It is more useful for students to view all writing as persuasive writing. In a descriptive paragraph, if they so effectively draw a picture that for a moment in time the reader holds no other image but that picture, they have persuaded the reader to hold that image. In a sustained description, if they so effectively create a metaphor that the reader has a new way of seeing, they have persuaded the reader to consider the viewpoint. In a short story, if they so effectively create characters and their actions within a plot that the reader believes the experience to be reflective of the human condition,

² Young, Becker, Pike, p. 9.

they have persuaded the reader to follow the characters in authentic experience. If students recognize that all writing holds within it the potential for persuasion, they will not readily respond to unthinking demands for simplistic explications in the context of the expository mode.

Those bits and pieces of a notion of rhetoric that this writer carried with her at the beginning of her study were just that, bits and pieces. No wonder that she had no overall definition of rhetoric, no wonder that she didn't see the relationship of composition to rhetoric, no wonder that she held a cloudy feeling that using rhetoric meant being manipulative in a negative sense. She had viewed only some of the parts and not the whole.

Perhaps Bruce's advice when he says, "Let's find that nail first... then we will study the hammer, but only in its application to the nail's purpose," is inadequate when applied to teachers. They need to see hammering as the process, the ways the hammer drives as the communicative variations, and the nails as the content worth driving. Students begin with the nail; teachers help them to recognize the nails and know what to do with them by knowing some things about the hammer.

Writers and Writing

A beginning step is a consideration of writers and writing. This listing certainly does not comprise all of the knowledge accumulated over centuries about students as learners/writers or about the entire composing process itself, but it is a useful accumulation of notions to guide teachers in planning how to proceed in the teaching of writing.

For many students, the phrase "English theme" signals that written communication is artificial, aimed at teachers only. Many students are, if not frightened, at least hesitant about their abilities to perform in a composition classroom. They don't know the rules; they have nothing to say; they believe that they do not need to know how to write. Yet, they have unconsciously known the rules of syntax since they were small; they have always been question askers with expressed wants and needs. They mask their fears and hesitancies of writing with the "do not need to know how to write" defensive line.

Most students consider the entire classroom process beginning with putting pen to paper and ending with reading a lot of scratchings in red ink as risky business. Yet, they know from many other out-of-classroom experiences that sharing the learning of a difficult task with others, although increasing self

revelment, decreases the negative aspects of risking simply by demonstrating that others take the same risks.

Students are aware, even if they don't often share their awareness, that some anxiety increases their learning. They so often say, "I learned the most from what was hardest for me." Yet, when trying those "hardest" things results in errors, they want the opportunity to decrease their margin of error, not to be punished for having committed error.

Students, like all people attempting something that is hard for them, are learners who need feedback, options, and the right to make conscious choices. Yet, these things mean little if the students are not viewed as thinkers who have been interpreters all their lives long.

Many students state that there is a lack of connection between writing assignments: "Writing is something we do every Friday." And students verbalize that they learn best when they recognize connections: "The next assignment is this kind of writing; I wish it were more like math where you can see that $2+2 = 4$."

Writing is an abstract function, and the ability to write is related to continuing stages of development. It is necessary for teachers of writing to know something of learning theory to

even know if the things they are asking for in writing are developmentally possible for a given group of learners.

Writing is a means for reflecting thinking and expressing meaning. It is much more than the algorithmic procedures suggesting that writing is only skill oriented, that organization is simply a use of transition sentences, and that drill will make perfect.

Writing in action requires an audience. For a student writer, it is most helpful to have that audience be a live one that can give responses and suggestions for revision.

Writing is a process, not a series of products. Through attention to the process, the writer can improve written products; through analysis of her/his products, the writer can refine the process.

Writing is a defining of the meaning a writer finds in her/his world and the connections of self to that world. Writing techniques allow for clearer expression of meaning, but the study of techniques cannot be profitably conducted as a separate entity from style and content.

Writing can best be learned through a sequence which provides a logical build of writing techniques. Without that build, teachers cannot expect student recognition of a composing process.

A Framework for a Curriculum Design

So that instructors of composition will not find themselves in the outmoded position of relying on classical definitions of form, in the dependent position of having to rely on a textbook to be the guiding frame for a writing course, there needs to be a direct application of theory to practice; there needs to be a curriculum that will be a wedding of the two.

Contemporary students so often say, "I know (or I don't know) where you're coming from." This piece of slang points to a real concern for being able to identify the base of anyone's remarks, the set of values and beliefs from which statements arise. Underlying the design of this curriculum are the following underpinnings based on the assumptions made about writers as learners and the writing process itself.

- I. Human beings need to find meaning in their lives and need to express the meaning that they find. These needs are the basis for the creative impulses of all humans, and are the context in which the composing process is realized.
- II. The composing process is the structuring reality of rhetoric, the parent discipline from which composition derives. People learn to write by interacting with the composing process; they learn to write by writing.
- III. The successful application of the composing process depends upon having something to say and knowing how to say it. A helpful composition curriculum must attend both to the structure of the discipline/ process to be

learned and the learners who attempt to master that discipline/process as a means to expression of personal meanings.

These three underpinnings imply certain requisites for a curriculum design which makes use of the notions about writers and writing.

There must be a theory of instruction. Jerome Bruner's work in the field of curriculum has a direct bearing on the teaching of composition. Bruner did pioneer work in the principles of curriculum design, cutting across discipline lines to encourage that knowledge of field be coupled with an examination of intelligence, learning, and motivation. Bruner says that a framework for instruction does four things: 1. Gives or prompts memory of experiences which effectively move the student toward learning. 2. Specifies ways to structure the body of knowledge. 3. Specifies the most effective sequence to present the knowledge and materials (content). 4. Specifies the nature and pacing of rewards and punishment in the process of learning and teaching.³

Bruner's overall framework presumes content in a course. This curriculum design is dependent upon the belief that there

³ Jerome S. Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (New York: Norton & Co., Inc., 1968), pp. 40-41.

is a content to a writing course; it comes with the students, encompassed in the sensations, images, events and ideas that they really care about. If teachers do not accept this premise, then there is no sense to having a writing course. As Richard L. Larson puts it, "If there is nothing to say, there is no reason to spend much energy on how to say it...this realization calls for considerable re-focusing of our efforts as teachers, as theorists of rhetoric, away from the formal, stylistic, and even logical difficulties of a completed utterance to the process by which a writer comes to have something to say in the first place."⁴

Invention, as the term is here used, means the process of students seeing what is of interest and value in their experiences, recognizing when something they see or read or feel warrants a response from them, actively inquiring into what is happening around them and within them, finding various modes and techniques of expression. This curriculum design stresses writing as a thinking, structured response to need and desire.

Various educators say writing is thinking or writing is the forerunner to thinking: "I don't know what I think until I write it down." A composition class is an opportunity to practice thinking, to lessen the blind power of outside determiners,

⁴ Richard L. Larson, "Discovery through Questioning: A Plan for Teaching Rhetorical Invention," College English, 30, No. 3 (1968), 131.

and to polish the written presentations of thinking. This curriculum design stresses writing as a by-product of thinking.

Bruner's framework for instruction calls for an element of a curriculum design that "gives or prompts memory of experiences which effectively move the student toward learning." An activator for introducing a writing assignment is a means of stimulating within students both curiosity and concern. An activator, as the term is here used, is a generator of a learning sequence; a good one has two basic qualities:

1. It shows students a gap between what they know and what they need to know to answer a question.
2. It stimulates within students a desire to discover means for finding their own answers to a question.

Within the actual presentation of the curriculum, there will be several activators for initiating learning sequences.

Bruner's framework for instruction calls for an element of a curriculum design that "specifies ways to structure the body of knowledge." The intellect operates by creating structures. Structures, as the term is here used, are means of organizing the body of knowledge and of visualizing processes in concrete ways so that students can consciously manipulate the knowledge, manipulate the processes until they are internalized and used spontaneously to the advantage of both students and instructor.

When students realize that a successful composition course is dependent upon their thinking abilities and is designed to help them experiment with and broaden those abilities, the composition course gains respect as students come to respect themselves as worthwhile creators and worthwhile evaluators.

Within the actual presentation of the curriculum, there will be several structures for organizing knowledge and visualizing processes within the learning sequences.

Bruner's framework for instruction calls for an element of a curriculum design that "specifies the most effective sequence to present the knowledge and materials." Writing techniques are best learned when they are presented in a cumulative manner, when students can see a connection between each technique and a building of those techniques to a meaningful whole. Cumulative build, as the term is here used, refers to the spiraling of assignments in both writing techniques and complexity of thinking.

The entire curriculum will be a model of a cumulative build.

Bruner's framework for instruction calls for an element of a curriculum design that "specifies the nature and pacing of rewards and punishment in the process of learning and teaching." Bruner does not use these words in a modern sense. He recognizes that adaptation consistently requires recognition of natural

rewards and punishments within an environment. Any social environment involves reinforcement and feedback. This curriculum design makes use of the workshop as the arena for providing both. Creating a workshop environment is a complex process and necessitates a discussion of the climate in which students write and share their writing. The classroom is a community of learners. The workshop approach to the teaching/learning of composition reinforces the value of joint learning efforts and the value of peers as evaluators.

Workshop: The Classroom Is a Community

Public education has sought an economical and feasible means of giving an equal opportunity for education to all students. One means of doing so was to group students together for classroom experiences, but educators became concerned that the need for efficiency was overshadowing each student's need for individualized instruction. Lacking the personnel to provide constant one-to-one instructional contact, educators developed specialized groupings within the high school curricula, while in higher education, general sections, honors sections, and pass-out options were offered.

There are significant drawbacks to all of these variations when they are applied to the teaching of composition. Tracking

fosters discrimination and denies any value in heterogeneous groupings for learning experiences. The pass-out option for composition classes reinforces the too prevalent notion that really they are classes for sub-standard students who need the presentation of a finite number of objectives that can be mastered.

Roger Garrison sought a solution to the specific problem of individualizing the instruction in composition by introducing the conference method.⁵ This method solely used prohibits group sharing of writing and denies the value of peer evaluation. The time factor alone is staggering; it is extremely difficult to provide enough in-depth one-to-one conferences to take care of all necessary instructional contact.

Given that most teachers do have groups of fifteen to twenty-five students in composition classes, the workshop method allows for the number to be an asset and not a liability. In order for the workshop approach to facilitate the fourth element of Bruner's framework for instruction -- the nature and pacing of rewards and punishment -- it is necessary for teachers to act on the belief that having students together in groups in classrooms to receive instruction gives them a means of making

⁵ Roger Garrison, "One-to-One: Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition," New Directions for Community Colleges, 2, No. 1 (1974), 55-84.

positive use of that togetherness to capitalize upon the opportunities for teaching/learning that the togetherness provides.

The inter-individual experience of a composition class is both social and cognitive. It is cognitive in the sense that it is a discovery of meaning and how to express it, social in the sense that teachers and students work together to learn, and through their efforts to learn together, recognize growth.

Kenneth Burke's attempts to define what he calls identification, "a kind of consubstantiality between speaker-writer and audience,"⁶ indicate that a student writer by plumbing his own experience -- actual and vicarious -- can learn to articulate an area of shared experience, imagery and value so that s/he can define her/his world and another can enter that world.

The process of plumbing can begin early in any composition class if the instructor asks students to consider these two major questions: How do I find meaning? How do I express the meaning I have found?⁷ These two broad questions comprise the overall framework for the composition course itself. As they are first presented, they initiate the learning process. Throughout the term, the two questions form the underlying

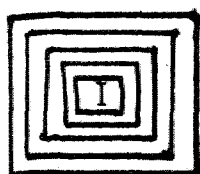
⁶ Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley, Calif.: University of Calif. Press, 1962), p. 55.

⁷ Jane E. Bell, Curriculum Design, Ninth Grade Humanities, Urbandale Comm. Schs., Urbandale, Ia., 1970.

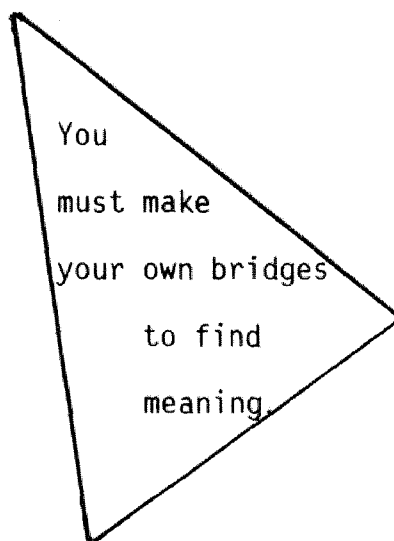
structure that facilitates the learning process as each presented writing technique adds breadth to the answer to the question, How do I express the meaning I have found?

Following is the Meaning Framework handout which is given to students at the first class meeting. They write their responses to the questions outside of class; their responses form the basis for discussion during the next meeting.

Name _____

Symbol

"Education is a
process that
changes the
learner."
-Bruner



The Meaning of
Intellectual Growth

"The thing is not
to remain adolescent
but to work toward
maturity, to appraise
life honestly and
with experience, not
naively but critically,
at the same time to
keep this openness,
this willingness to
to face reality." -Cooke

-
- I. How do I find meaning?
 - A. What makes something boring/exciting?
 - B. Is there a difference between knowing and understanding?
 - C. What are thinking processes?
 - D. Do you recognize any correlation between discovering relationships and finding meaning?
 - E. What part do questions play in finding meaning?

F. What things make up your base for interpretation?
(means for understanding anything)

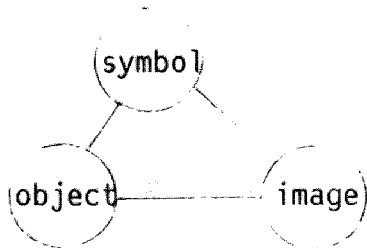
II. How do I express the meaning I have found?

A. Is there a relevant reason for each of us to be a writer?

B. Are your experiences worth writing about?

C. In what ways is every writer also an interpreter?

D.

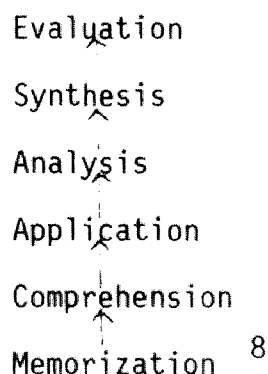


This diagram represents the symbol process; can you see any differences in the application of this process between the creator (writer) and the interpreter (reader)?

E. What do you think a process of abstraction might be?

F. What is an inference?

Specific guidelines for the class discussion are not needed as the questions generally suggest in themselves the direction the discussion might take. One possible exception is the question regarding thinking processes, I. C. It is helpful for a teacher to ask students very simply, "What can you do with your head? What kinds of thinking are you capable of doing?" Once a list has been compiled, the instructor can share Bloom's model.



Students can readily see that memorization is the simplest process because it calls only for linear thinking. Students laugh and talk of the many times they have crammed for tests, then promptly forgotten the information after the exams. They realize that understanding and being able to apply what is understood are more complex and meaningful processes than mere memorization. They are capable of recognizing that one of the

⁸ Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1956).

beginning steps to really understanding anything is to be able to take it apart and view its pieces. Creativity takes on new dimensions of meaning for them when viewed as a process of synthesis, putting pieces together in a different way. They recognize evaluation as a high-level process when they begin to see that one can wisely judge what is only in the context of alternative possibilities.

The discussion of the Meaning Framework sets an immediate tone for the intellectual/cognitive demand of the course. The demand is a shared one for all who will work and learn together in the classroom environment. People who know one another are more apt to develop commitment to intellectual tasks at hand as well as a trusting relationship with those who share in those tasks.

The writing class can begin with two activities that initiate the knowing of one another. One is the name game so often used in human relations training. After a brief introduction to the course that sets expectations in terms of attendance, frequency of writing, class routine, and grading, the instructor tells students that they are going to do one of the singly most important assignments of the course, learn everyone's name. The instructor begins by introducing her/himself, telling some things about background, family, attitudes toward writing and

letting everyone know that s/he prefers to be called by first name. The person to the instructor's right names her/him, then introduces her/himself and so on around the circle. The person to the instructor's left has the task of naming everyone, but has also had the opportunity to hear the names the greatest number of times. It always increases the instructor's involvement if s/he ends the activity by naming everyone. It also proves teacher fallibility when s/he stumbles or forgets.

The other activity is a written one which gives an instructor some added insight about the students who occupy a classroom with her/him. Students fill out the following personal inventory during class time or return it at the next class meeting.

Personal Inventory:

And have you traveled very far?
 Far as the eye can see.
 How often have you been there?
 Often enough to know.
 What did you see when you were there?
 Nothing that doesn't show.

John Lennon/Paul McCartney

1. Name _____ Home address and phone _____

 College address and phone _____

2. Major and College

3. Advisor

4. What previous writing and/or literature courses have you had?

<u>Title</u>	<u>Kind of writing done*</u>	<u>Amount of writing</u>
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*(essays, book reports, research paper,
 creative writing, etc.)

5. What would you say are your chief strengths as a writer?

6. In what way(s) would you like your writing to improve this term?

7. What bothers you the most about writing, if anything?

8. If you were asked to categorize yourself in one of these areas of personalities, which would you choose? Explain your reasons for placing yourself in this category.

- a. Outgoing
- b. Withdrawn
- c. Changeable
- d. Interested, but quiet

9. If you could choose, which of the following groups would you prefer as a learning environment?
 - a. Large group lecture
 - b. Small discussion group
 - c. Individual learning project
 - d. Team work (4-5 students) in problem-solving group
10. If you were asked to name the four most important things/relationships in your life right now, what would you list? Defend your choices.
11. If you were asked to identify yourself in only four short sentences, what four would you write to best describe you as a person?
12. What social problem facing us today most concerns you? Why? What actions have you taken to help solve this problem? What would you personally like to do to help?
13. Most of us plan for the future, dream about it, work toward it. Of all your hopes for the future, which is most important to you?
14. If you had two spare hours to spend as you wished, what would you do with your time? With two weeks?

These activities are not human relations frosting added to a course; these are ways to enhance student growth. John Warnock talks of positive ways that teachers may assist growth through "nurturing." He bases most of his comments on Piaget's theory that development depends in part upon a person having "social and inter-individual experience." Concern for "social experience" in the classroom alarms teachers who believe that it can lead to an "anything goes" atmosphere which denies them proper control. Warnock replies that this expectation has no more sound basis for the composition classroom than it does in "real" society.

The search for sound bases for cooperation entails the development of standards for factual accuracy, logical reasoning, a shared sense of rights, duties and privileges... all those qualities that emerge out of and characterize 'real' social interaction. Teachers who worry about their students losing a sense of the need for objectivity if they 'open up' their classrooms to 'social and inter-individual experience' have got it backwards. A sense of the need for objectivity is not born in us. It develops, as through social interaction we begin to appreciate the need for a shared sense of things and the difficulty of achieving that sense.

Youth is not a warm-up exercise for life, and the composition classroom is not an artificial arena of communication. The people there are living now, and their meeting together lets

⁹ John Warnock, "New Rhetoric and the Grammar of Pedagogy," Freshman English News, 5, No. 2 (1976), 12.

them share real communication. It is a place to test the effectiveness of one's written communication -- something the professional author must wait to judge through reviews and sales charts. It is a rich experience for a composition student to share writing within the rhetorical context of a live, responsive, evaluative audience.

Evaluation, as the term is here used, refers to three stages of a continuing process: 1. A pre-writing stage for the writer, 2. A post-draft stage for an audience of peers and instructor, 3. An ongoing stage for the writer evaluating her/his own writing and the course itself.

Larson identifies three sorts of evaluation that can help stimulate the desire to write.

1. The discovery that the subject being studied can be compared in some way to another subject or to a remembered experience... perhaps leading to the making of a generalization.
2. The personal response of 'I like a thing' or 'I don't like it'; 'I believe this thing or event is good or is not good or is dangerous...' perhaps leading to the making of a supported personal judgment.
3. The detection of conflict, inconsistency, or inexplicability in the answers to questions...perhaps leading to informative exploration of the problem and, hence, toward something worth saying in a piece of writing.¹⁰

¹⁰ Larson, pp. 129-130.

The writer arrives at a conviction and writes about that conviction; s/he still needs to know if s/he has done so effectively to lead a reader to respect that conviction. By sharing the piece of writing with a small group of peers and by receiving written comments on the draft from the instructor, the writer can come to know the responses of the live audience: their likes and dislikes, their judgments of value, their recognitions of need for elaboration, explanation, clarification, illustration, and their suggestions for how to revise.

There will be differences in the responses, sometimes outright contradictions in both opinions/judgments and suggestions for revision. Now the writer must evaluate the feedback s/he is receiving. It is fair for students to be told that peer responses and instructor responses may be unreliable ones because of a lack of knowledge of the subject matter of the paper, a lack of understanding of the writer's intent, a lack of recognition of various writing techniques, and a lack of agreement in matters of taste. If the writer recognizes her/his responsibility to choose among options that seem likely to improve the paper, or to choose not to act on suggestions received, s/he learns at once the power of feedback and the risks of integrity that any social context brings to bear. Whatever the choice, the value lies in the rethinking. If

changes are to be made, revision becomes a part of the generative art of writing, an integral step in the composing process that should be encouraged.

The workshop setting provides a real audience that can give valuable feedback if grouping is used to encourage the giving of feedback and the acting upon that feedback. Large group can be used for the generating of ideas, the giving of an assignment and the ensuing discussion, and for the general sharing of writing and the giving of feedback. Small groups ranging from pairs to five or sometimes more members can be used for peer evaluation of writing with suggestions for revision. The number of members varies according to the intensity of the evaluation session, whether the papers are to be read aloud or silently, whether previously read copies have been shared, and at what point in the term the session is taking place. Early in the course students tend to be more comfortable with two- or three-member small groups, but by the end of the term, they are fully ready to share their writing aloud before large group as well as lead their own evaluation discussions.

The process of authentic writing and shared evaluation of that writing involves a great deal of self-revelment and risk regardless of the size of the group in which it is shared. Dysfunctional anxiety accompanying the risk can be lessened if

students clearly understand the evaluative task before them during any given meeting and particularly if they understand the evaluative role of the instructor.

The concept of a community of learners applies to the teacher's membership as well. The instructor lets students know that s/he is only one member of a small group and in matters of taste, value, and liking can certainly be outvoted. Instructor participation as an evaluator significantly differs from students' participation in that when someone is stuck and doesn't know what to do about it, the instructor is supposed to be able to offer helpful suggestions. S/he offers these suggestions in a verbal format while participating in evaluative sessions and in a written format when commenting as any fellow learner would to share questions, concerns and like experiences that are prompted by the student writing. This makes the instructor's evaluative task a much greater and more responsible one than simply commenting on deviations from rules.

Of course, there will be comments advising grammatical and mechanical corrections, but they will be emphasized as they help the individual student with her/his specific writing problems. The words "emphasized" and "specific" are key words for an instructor to remember when s/he is pondering the best way to help students with problems of grammar, punctuation, and

spelling. Many research studies have suggested that there is no necessary correlation between one's ability to describe the language and one's ability to use it. The studies do not suggest a total avoidance of general discussions of mechanics, but they do imply, as does Wayne C. Booth that,

we'd find [in freshman composition texts] a good deal more than half of the discussions of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style totally divorced from any notion that rhetorical purpose to some degree controls all such matters. We can offer objective descriptions of levels of usage from now until graduation, but unless the student discovers a desire to say something to somebody and learns to control his diction for a purpose, we've gained very little.¹¹

Suggestions for alternative techniques will also be offered at the post-draft stage. The timing of the offerings reflects a belief that students are capable of creative communication, that as part of an audience they respond honestly, and that, as writers, they attend to the feedback they receive.

Every learner should have the freedom to experience error and to diminish the margin of error. For after all, as John Warnock so succinctly puts it, "Writing is action at risk."¹²

¹¹ Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetorical Stance," in Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings, ed. W. Ross Winterowd (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975), p. 75.

¹² Warnock, p. 4.

Chapter II

The Design: An Initiation

An Invitation to Risk-taking

Many instructors will consider use of this curriculum to be demonstrative of teaching being action at risk. And, indeed, it will be. They will be risking commitment to the philosophic beliefs, values, and instructional ideas of another. They will be risking allocation of the necessary time for planning and evaluating to make the course successful. The risk exists because there is no valid promise in any curriculum design of unequivocal success.

They can be assured that the designer has used this curriculum as it is here presented during the period of the last four school years: two of them as a graduate assistant on a semester system at Drake University, two of them as an instructor on a quarter system at Iowa State University. During those four years the curriculum has evolved and been refined due to the feedback of students and other instructors who have experienced its usage. Readers are invited to freely make use of what has been discovered over the past four years and to adapt what is shared in ways that will make this curriculum plan uniquely theirs.

The following sections will be a walk-through of the curriculum itself. For each writing assignment, there will be given the purpose of the assignment, the thinking processes and accompanying skills that are stressed, and the evaluative processes used. In most cases, there will be three student papers presented after the discussion of each assignment. The example papers are not meant to be definitive; they are not meant to suggest generalizations about all composition students. They are meant to exemplify different levels of sophistication in student writing, to reflect stylistic variations in individual responses to group assignments, to model teacher comments as stimuli for revision as part of the composing process.

Revision is a continuous process for a writer, not just a final proofreading. A writer sometimes revises ideas as well as their verbalizations before putting pen to paper, while writing the first draft, and again as s/he rereads the draft. Revision is encouraged at least two more times by student comments shared in small group and by teacher comments on the draft handed in for written evaluation.

Classmates and instructor all serve as tryout audiences for the writer. The tryouts are necessary if the concern in composition is with helping students learn to write, for learning to write involves engagement with the entire composing process of which revisions are a normal part.

Teacher comments can be positive instruments for helping students learn what writing is and how to do it better. There are some negative aspects to thorough teacher commenting which need to be addressed; 1. It is time consuming. 2. There is a tendency for the instructor to rewrite for the student. 3. Correcting is often substituted for commenting.

W.U. McDonald, Jr. in his article "The Revising Process and the Marking of Student Papers," addresses the problem of time quite directly by reminding teachers that if they are concerned with helping students learn to write, they are "obliged to allow them to submit several drafts to which [instructors] are obliged to respond."¹ The obligation need not be so time consuming if the instructor concerns her/himself with one major concept at a time. When commenting on the first draft, the instructor may "raise questions to help the writer see the possibilities of the direction that has been found or to clarify matters that must be dealt with once the direction has been found."² If points of usage, mechanics, and grammar are obstacles to communication they can of course be marked, but it may be wise to reserve this type of commenting for a later

¹ W.U. McDonald, Jr., "The Revising Process and the Marking of Student Papers," College Composition and Communication, 29 (1978), 167.

² McDonald, p. 167.

draft as writers cannot successfully pay attention to everything at one time. By the time the instructor comments on the final draft, there will be fewer directive comments to make.

The tendency to rewrite for the students can be overcome by relying heavily on comments in the form of questions rather than statements, on giving students a variety of alternatives to ponder. In this way, comments become stimuli to revision rather than revisions themselves.

Sitting at a desk with red pen in hand, marking in the margins of papers countless symbols for mechanical and grammatical errors is a familiar task for most instructors, one that they have adopted as a time saver. Wayne C. Booth finds the task to be both unpleasurable and non-productive.

Charts of grading symbols that mar even the best freshman texts are not the innocent time savers that we pretend. Plausible as it may seem to arrange for more corrections with less time, they inevitably reduce the student's sense of purpose in writing. When he sees innumerable w13's and p19's in the margin, he cannot possibly feel that the art of persuasion is as important to his instructor as when he reads personal comments, however few."³

The personal comments should include the reactions of the instructor as a real reader, one who questions, praises, expresses doubts and delight. When s/he feels the need to be specifically directive, the instructor is more helpful to the student if

³ Booth, pp. 76-77.

s/he utilizes the four reformulation operations of Ross Winterowd: deleting, reordering, substituting, and embedding, which comprise the major language usage changes a student might profitably make.⁴

As the student revises successive drafts, s/he includes them all in the cumulative folder. At the end of the term, whole folder grading is a means for both instructor and student seeing a visible record of changes, of development and growth, throughout the term.

An Initial Step in the Writing Process

As a preliminary measure students are asked to write a paper to be used for diagnostic purposes. The instructor explains that it is one of the few times during the term that the topic of the paper will be set; other than that statement, no directions are given for the assignment beyond those that are printed at the top of the following handout. The students are to draw upon whatever background they have had in composition courses, notions they have about writing, and experiences they have had that seem related to the topical questions to create what they consider to be a paper.

⁴ Winterowd, p. 35.

Diagnostic Writing Assignment #1

Following are three different paper assignments; choose one of them which interests you and write a paper discussing your ideas about the questions posed in the assignment. (The quotations are placed with each topic to stimulate your thinking.)

This writing assignment will help diagnose your writing strengths and weaknesses. This paper will not be returned until midpoint in the term, at which time you will be doing a second piece of diagnostic writing.

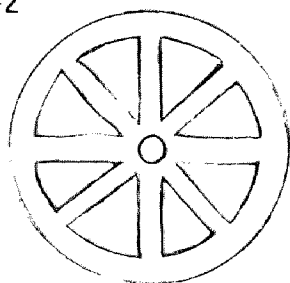
Choice #1

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day.
"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse,
"It's a thing that happens to you."
"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful.
"Does it happen all at once," Rabbit asked, "or bit by bit?"
"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse.
"You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are REAL, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are REAL you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."
The Rabbit sighed. He wished that he could become real without these uncomfortable things happening to him.

Margery Williams
The Velveteen Rabbit

How do you define a "real" person? Is it necessary to understand everything to be "real?" Should you accept or perhaps demand limitations on what you will know? Do you think that life forces us to try to know more than we sometimes want to? It is a mark of being human that we keep trying to know?

Choice #2



"I am the center of my own existence."

"Basically we survive in this world because somebody loves us."

Imagine your life with yourself and with others as a wheel. Where do you place yourself? What relationships are important in your life?

A wheel consists of an interplay of tensions -- a force pushing outward to meet other forces pushing inward. In order to survive as a person, what balance of inward and outward forces do you seek?

A wheel is round and can roll forever; for how long and by what means can you keep rolling?

Choice #3

Within me is the potential to commit every evil I see being committed by other men, and unless I feel this potential I can at any moment be controlled by these same urges. I am free from these urges only if I recognize when I am feeling them and while feeling them and acknowledging them to be me, choose not to follow them. Only in this way can I begin to regain the disowned parts of me. And only in this way can I know what it is I am criticizing in others.

Hugh Prather
Notes to Myself

How do you define evil? Do you believe you are capable of doing evil to yourself and others? If we can define evil and recognize it by its label, why do evil acts persist in occurring? Is there a difference between destructive feelings and evil acts?

Are there purely evil feelings or purely good ones? If there were no potential for evil in each of us, would conflict cease to be a part of our lives?⁵

⁵ Jane E. Bell and Joyce D. Shaffer, "Creating a Landscape for Learning," an unpublished manuscript, pp. 54, 76, 95.

The purpose of the assignment is to determine what kinds of responses students will make given little direction: Will they have a central focus to the paper? Will they meaningfully organize the paper? Will they utilize experience (actual and vicarious) to illustrate their points? Will they display an authentic writing personality?

During the following week after the diagnostic papers are handed in, the instructor evaluates the writings, making detailed comments concerning the above questions. It is not unusual for the majority of the papers to lack a central idea; students seem to assume that the topics themselves stand in place of ideas regarding these topics. Many times students answer the questions on the handout sheet in order, letting such an ordering pass for an organizational pattern. Most students make some reference to personal experience, but usually not in a specific way. The pronoun "I" rarely appears in the written words, signalling that students have been instructed in the past not to make assertions which are their own. If students do make strong personal statements, they oftentimes fail to give logical support to the statements.

A second, more significant, evaluative stage will take place at midterm when students will compare their second diagnostic paper to this one, making their own evaluation. The first

diagnostic papers are filed and the regular sequence of assignments is begun.

Why Narrative First?

Any curriculum design that is based on a cumulative build is superior to one that presents random assignments. To understand why this particular design calls first for the presentation of narrative assignments, it is necessary to discuss the inaccuracy of labels applied to writing, the processes by which an individual perceives reality, as well as the ways these processes are tied to the purposes of writing and the various techniques for expression.

College catalogue descriptions of writing courses offered by departments of English reflect genre distinctions that are not false but are misleading. The reader of the description is led to perceive two distinct labels. Courses described as centering on building essays that are explanatory, persuasive, and argumentative are labeled as exposition; those that are described as centering on constructing fiction and poetry are labeled as creative writing. Students and teachers alike are thereby encouraged to accept that there is a distinct difference in the language used in exposition and that used in creative writing.

Stanley Fish has attacked the notion that the language of exposition -- or any discursive prose -- is somehow intrinsically different from "literary language." Fish insists that there is no such thing as ordinary language, language which simply conveys messages. Instead, there is a world of utterances issued in specific situations by human beings, beings psychologically incapable of value-free discourse. At the heart of these utterances, Fish notes, "is precisely that realm of values, intentions, and purposes which is often assumed to be the exclusive property of literature."⁶

William T. Ross reviewing the work of Fish drew the obvious conclusion that,

If the language of exposition does not differ from the literary, it is justifiable to say that it is just as 'creative.' Yet this epithet has long been exclusively assigned to accepted literary genres. Such restricted usage, however, contradicts one of the main assumptions of Kantian epistemology, which insists that the mind is always creative, always making order and pattern out of the chaos of sense experience."⁷

⁶ Stanley Fish, "How Ordinary Is Ordinary Language?" New Literary History, 5 (1973-74), 42.

⁷ William T. Ross, "The Aesthetics of Exposition," College Composition and Communication, 30 (1979), 171-72.

The determiner for an appropriate division focuses on products, not differences in usage of language. The labels exposition and narration can reasonably be used to categorize written products in which either expository or narrative techniques dominate.

Confusion exists when artificial barriers are erected to exclude the possibility of shared techniques between exposition and narration. A person continually stores images; s/he creates and recreates images when expressing verbally (both spoken and written) to another. In turn, the listener/reader forms images. By necessity, the creation of an image involves description, which is often designated as narration rather than a series of narrative techniques. Narrative techniques are often designated as tools for the creative writing class, as though narrative techniques cannot be used in exposition.

Pearl Hoguefe in a 1956 text, The Process of Creative Writing, speaks directly about techniques shared between exposition and narration. Hoguefe points out that writers of fiction use author comment, character analysis, and summarization of events between specific scenes to communicate information not open to inference. Likewise, writers of exposition use narrative techniques to support, clarify, and make ideas interesting.⁸

⁸ Pearl Hoguefe, The Process of Creative Writing (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 307-08.

Robert G. Kraft in his article, "The Death of Argument," specifically talks about the value of using description in the expository frame: "Argument through abstraction does not grip the mind and move the emotions the way images can."⁹

It is not enough to protest a misuse of genre distinctions, for the protest does not substantiate a case for students first learning narrative writing techniques. What is needed is neither new labels nor new definitions of old ones, but a view of writing through a new perspective which will free student writers to move beyond artificial limitations to create worlds, utilizing any techniques which enhance meaning.

If the process of writing is one which helps student writers learn to build bridges/connections between stored and created experience, between intuition and concept, between self-analysis and other-oriented communication, the questions are as follows:

1. Can a narrative base for learning the writing process be a means to achieving these goals?
2. Is there value in first learning narrative techniques?
3. Do narrative techniques transfer to expository writing?
4. Is student use of those techniques a key to making exposition colorful and interesting?

⁹ Robert G. Kraft, "The Death of Argument," College English, 36, No. 5 (1975), 550.

It is useful in order to define experience to consider by what processes a writer assimilates and forms her/his views of reality and by what processes s/he expresses those views. The processes by which an individual comes to form this perception of the real are in operation long before s/he puts pen to paper; thus, the processes are part of the pre-writing stage if this formulative base is tied to attempts at written expression.

Every person's view of life is determined by a combination of outside and inside influences. A personal view of reality is shaped in part by the culture in which an individual lives, the medium through which that culture communicates, the social needs a class imposes upon the individual, and the closest set of familial and communal shaping forces. All of these factors influence an individual's perception of self in the world. Each person has innate human needs, an active intelligence, and a continually growing base for interpretation (accumulation of experiences and conclusions about them) that also aid in determining her/his perception of the real. These inside determiners act as a filtering system for all outside influences. Once the influences have passed through the filter and become part of an individual's reality image, both vicarious and actual experiences become stored personal experience.

The best content for writers in an introductory composition course is their own experiences. This statement is not a simplistic one suggesting that content should be only actual individual experience, but a reinforcement of the view of R.D. Laing given in The Politics of Experience that "without the inner the outer loses its meaning, and without the outer the inner loses its substance."¹⁰

Equally confounding as the practice of excluding vicarious experience from the realm of personal experience is the pretentious conflict established regarding the "true purpose of writing." There are those who say that writing is the means of expressing intuitions to learn something about self and those who say that writing is the means of expressing concepts to help others learn. The division equates expression of emotional experience with writing as therapy and the expression of logical experience with writing as explanation/persuasion; it denies the value in the crossing of techniques for the creative purpose of communicating meaning, which as Noam Chomsky says, "is the heart of human language capability."¹¹

¹⁰ R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience (1967; rpt. New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p. 54.

¹¹ Noam Chomsky, Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 66.

There is a need for recognizing that emotion and logic are not as separable as they once may have seemed. James E. Miller, Jr. speaks of feeling as basic to humanity: "We feel and therefore we believe."¹² People are willing to know and to understand; intuition can lead to knowledge. In the writing process, the attempt to find meaning and to express meaning can and should coincide. The writer is both interpreter and creator.

Before a person is an interpreter, s/he is an image storer; before s/he is an inference drawer, s/he is an interactor; an individual experiences emotions before s/he conceptualizes their meanings. It seems reasonable to design beginning writing assignments of an introductory composition course with this knowledge in mind.

The student coming into the classroom is not a blank awaiting content; s/he has been interacting with life, with people for years. S/he has stored many images of the events encountered and of the relationships formed. An integral part of the images are the emotional reactions associated with experiences. Motivation for writing relies on tapping those emotional reactions, on awakening awareness that an individual is capable of seeing and expressing in a way that is valuable to others.

¹² Miller, p. 176.

Richard Lloyd-Jones reiterates the view that there are no clear categories of writing that specifically call for or exclude expression of emotion. In his article, "Ex Nihilo," Lloyd-Jones says:

Literary language is the language which calls attention to itself as language, enforces its rules upon discourse and the usual purposes of discourse -- expression, explanation, and persuasion. One expresses substance and feeling as perceived; one explains them as understood; one gains acceptance for them with other people. All of these take place within the conventions of rhetoric. Creation occurs when language is extended for its own sake beyond the narrow purposes of situational constraints to bring a new order to the subsurface of chaos. I speak, of course, not of clear categories, but of a continuum.¹³

When a student recognizes that there is a continuum of language usage, providing choices among means for differing ends, s/he will see that classifying writing either by traditional rhetorical modes or by traditional genres throws no light upon the processes involved in the writing. James Britton encourages students to write close to the self, to do "expressive" writing. He could be charged with merely adding another level to an already long and confusing list, but his classification system significantly differs from those of traditional rhetorical modes and traditional genres. He classifies writing by function

¹³ Richard Lloyd-Jones, "Ex Nihilo," College English, 40, No. 2 (1978), 148-49.

categories and audience categories, encouraging students to use all writing as a means of expression in words to someone. His definitive study, The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18, convincingly shows this understanding to be the foundation for learning, writing with enjoyment, and developing a strong transactional or public voice.¹⁴

The terms personal, expressive, and narrative are often used interchangeably by composition textbook writers and rarely is a series of writing techniques given for accomplishing personal/expressive/narrative writing. Narrative techniques, as the terms are here used, refer to those associated with creating the form of fiction: plot, setting, and character. These techniques include use of the five senses in description (the notion of show, don't tell); selection of details to reinforce a mood or attitude; focus of a point of view in characterization (first person, third person, alter ego, omniscient narrator, dialogue, interior monologue, stream of consciousness); creation of an organic plot including conflict; and recognition of a theme, an underlying major statement about life. In this curriculum, the narrative techniques are taught first because

¹⁴ James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McCleod and Harold Rosen, The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18 (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1975).

the designer believes narration to be the most natural form of expression and because the sensory details of narration are especially important to personalized exposition.

A college freshman remarked on the opening day of his composition class, "I can't write; I've never been anywhere or seen anything; I don't have anything to say that would interest others." He was given a first assignment of writing a paragraph of description relying basically on his sense of sight. Following is the piece of writing he produced.

Once again the bitty calico kitten came bouncing across the cow yard, dodging cow pies like a half-scared bunny fleeing from its foe. The kitten hurriedly lapped the milk that had dripped from the cow. By then the cow had reached the ramp leading into the milking parlour, where she expected her ground feed to be waiting. The kitten caught up to the huge beast and was on her way to passing the cow, when she misjudged one of the jagged edged hoofs. Squash, like a tomato being stepped on by an anxious little child wanting to help in the garden. A mixture of blood and organs lay in the gutter beside its crunched body. The signs of its kicking about were that of a chicken with its head just cut off. The farmer, realizing what had happened, picked the lifeless body up by the tail and tossed it lightly out the door.

Joe Baldus

It is best to begin, not with the problems of the universe, but with what appear to be the trivia of everyday events. Through the expression of the "trivia," Joe has been given the

opportunity to discard inhibitions that keep the eye off the page. He has discovered a point of view and a perspective through which he records what the eye sees. He has discovered that concrete reality equals descriptions.

Chapter III: Narrative Techniques

Using the Five Senses

The instructor can pose the following question as an activator to the beginning writing assignment: What are your best tools for writing? Typical reluctant student responses are similar to those of Joe's: "I can't write; I don't know how" or "I don't have anything interesting to say; nothing exciting has ever happened to me." Not having been involved in a gory car accident or having played a role in a love triangle, a student often thinks s/he has nothing of interest to share, failing to recognize that "the best material for creative writing is the stuff of experience, especially inner experience or outer experience interpreted by inner feeling."¹

By simply stating that all people have the same five means of perceiving which lead to good writing, unless they have been injured or born with a defect, the instructor can quickly elicit from students a list of the five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, feeling (including tactile, kinesthetic, and thermal), and tasting.

¹ Hogrefe, p. ix.

The instructor can then ask students to describe in words the following sensations. [Credit to Pearl Hogue is here acknowledged for some of the following discussion examples.]

1. Hearing rain on a metallic roof, tires on dry pavement, lightning and thunder, bacon frying, fingernails across a blackboard. (There will be an immediate discovery of the difficulty of using only one sense for description. The instructor can then talk about the necessity of combining senses for good description -- perhaps making one sense dominant.)
2. Seeing a snow-covered hillside (the instructor should caution against triteness), a lost puppy, a person's face in pain, sorrow, enjoyment.
3. Smelling coffee perking, burning hair, a damp basement, a cigar in a tight car, a locker room. (This sense is especially difficult to describe in words. There is a great dependence upon the shared remembrance of the listener/reader.)
4. Feeling a cold shower, the hug of a friendly person, a wool sweater, a silk dress, anger, pain, homesickness, excitement. (This sense could also be called "touching and being touched," for it involves the abstract aspect of the human emotions. However, there are concrete clues to the emotional state of an individual through physical responses. This is true whether a person is inferring the emotional state of another or taking check of her/his own.)
5. Tasting rare roast beef, wedding cake, medicine, ice cream, perspiration, pizza. (Since the taste buds only distinguish sweet, sour, salty, and bitter, a description of this sense also sometimes depends upon shared remembrance of the listener/reader and perhaps the usage of texture descriptions.)

The experience of orally responding gives students some initial successes using descriptive words before they are asked to produce them in writing. Students should finish the activator realizing that it is the ability to structure sensory input into verbal images that makes experiencing a peculiarly human phenomenon.

The ensuing discussion can center on sharing pieces of descriptive writing (representative papers included on the handout can be used for this purpose) to determine what senses are used, which sense dominates, and how effective the written piece is in terms of showing and not telling. All of the examples are pieces of student writing. Class participants are invited to comment concerning weaknesses as well as strengths in the examples.

The representative papers included with each assignment are ones commented upon prior to the students' final drafts. Hopefully, the teacher comments are models of positive instruments for helping students. When the representative papers are shared in class as bases for discussion, the instructor may find it beneficial to allow students to view the written comments by including the representative papers on handouts; other times, the papers can be read aloud or included minus comments on handouts so as not to influence the direction of the discussion.

Using the Five Senses: Narrative Assignment #1

Observe, analyze and write, describing through sensory words 1 sound, 1 object or person, 2 touch sensations (1 tactile, thermal or kinesthetic and 1 emotional), 1 odor, and 1 taste. You can combine senses as long as one sense is dominant. You may either write six separate descriptions or one sustained piece including as many of the senses as are realistic. The writing is due the next class meeting to be shared in small groups, where you will evaluate the descriptions in a manner similar to the evaluation of representative papers that follow in this handout. You will then have the opportunity to revise based on the suggestions you receive from your classmates before you turn the descriptions in to the instructor for written comments. After receiving the written comments, you may revise one more time. Keep a folder of your written work, including drafts and revisions, to be turned in to the instructor at midterm and at final time for a complete evaluation in terms of progress.

*This is a
good
comparison;
the simile
expresses
your feeling
of
awkwardness.*

As I stood just ahead of the yard stripe,
I felt like a bandage on a thumb. I said to
myself, Everybody is watching you. Don't goof

*The interior
monologue
is an
effective
usage for
emphasizing
your
emotions.*

up and let them around your end. I could feel the sweat and dirt run out of my helmet and down my neck. I could faintly hear my team yelling and cheering for each other. I tried to concentrate on the red jerseys just ahead, standing as if marching into battle.

The short sentences reinforce the step-by-step procedure the player has learned for carrying out a play.

My stomach seemed to turn over as the ball soared into the air and down into the waiting arms of number twenty-three. He headed my way. I began to run. I hoped he would not come way outside into my territory. I side-stepped a blocker. I raised my head and could see that he was all mine. A cold chill went up my neck and down to my legs. I reached full speed, lowered my head, and waited for the inevitable impact.

Whap! A flash of white, like that of a camera's flashblub, went through my eyes. I got up slowly. My head seemed to want to blow up. I gave my neck a quick snap and slowly trotted back to the defense. The jitters were gone. I was ready to play ball.

"seemed to" lessens the impact of these two sentences.

The contrast of the closing sentence with the detailed description of Marty Keltner of the "jitters" is a good way to compare pre-game feelings with those after the hit.

Shoe-protected feet pushed the roll of prickly barbed wire along the grass just above the bank of the creek. After receiving a particularly strong kick, the roll turned toward the creek and began to tumble over the bank. Instinctively Right Arm reached to halt the misguided roll of razor-sharp barbs. Before Right Arm realized what it had done, pain shot into Right Ring Finger. Both Ears heard skin rip from the whirling barbs' gash. Face opened to allow Voice to be heard. Face then winced. Right Arm retracted to avoid further damage. (Stupid Right Arm in the first place.) Deep red blood gushed out through Finger. Finger reacted to pain with violent throbs. Both Legs ran to carry Finger

I like your use of capitalization to give the body parts names, signalling that they have personalities

to be treated for its wounds. Eventually the wound healed, but Finger always blamed Right Arm for lack of common sense in reaching out like it did. The scar on Finger reminds Right Arm of its guilt. Right Arm feels very badly about the whole thing.

Steve, you have written a very creative description. -- Steve Moeller The use of personification is a unique one in this context. It allows you to emphasize emotional reactions along with the tactile, hearing, and sight impressions.

NEW YORK TO NEWARK: 7:48

She flew into the PATH train just in time; the mechanical doors almost trapped her. Packages from Macys and Saks Fifth Avenue spilled from her arms and rudely interrupted the silence of her fellow passengers. Glares, except from the decrepit old wino in the back who gave her a toothless grin.

Repelled, but oddly amused, she gathered up her packages, carefully rearranged her skirt, and sat back to inspect the occupants of the car. The Saks lady's impersonal stare examined each person as if he were an amoeba under a microscope.

Three staid, proper businessmen were studiously reading their newspapers, neatly folded lengthwise with just enough showing so that the passengers could see the name: The Wall Street Journal. Each was a chameleon in a dusky grey overcoat and brown hat. Blending, interchanging, they composed a thick and serious conglomerate. The train jerked. All three black vinyl briefcases fell over; bam, bam, bam! Three embarrassed hands reached down. Six eyes carefully avoided each other, remaining glued to the opening prices.

A young man wedged himself and his Playboy magazine in a very dark corner. His nervous eyes darted to each passenger. Are you looking at me? The lank hair was cut, framing his

This paragraph is beautifully developed to indicate the sameness of the businessmen.

your verb choices imply the young man's secretive feelings.

pale, almost blue ears, which burned red as he caught the Saks lady's glance. The eyes scuttled to a safe poster which commanded him to watch Channel 7 Eye Witness News.

Beaming jovially, the cleaning lady, ^{To use a cliché,} whose smell of Lysol permeated the artificially ^{the} produced cool of the train car, shed her ^{description} blessings on everyone. ^{of the cleaning lady's demeanor}

The toothless old wino scabbled for ^{is a "breath of fresh air" in the otherwise dank} something on the floor, grabbed it and held up ^{descriptions} his prize, a moldy tangerine. He threw the world a shamed look of defiance and carefully

I'm not sure what a "shamed look of defiance" is. A specific description might be more effective.

set to peeling. His twisted fingers scraped, poked, pried, ripped the fruit. Fascinated, the two women and the student watched. The old derelict's lips drew back and his eyes popped as he frantically picked and ripped the rotted peel away. Now the three businessmen watched him closely. Repulsed, but transfixed, ^{around this sentence. Can you see the problem with the person "has" & "is" meaning build a sense of heightened drama.} no one could tear his eyes away. He picked out an unidentified object, threw it, and tore off the last green-orange scrap. The passengers ^{you} leaned forward. The wino looked around daring a challenge. He took the fruit and crammed the whole thing into his toothless mouth. Juice, pulp, slime ran over his lips and made light orange stains that spread across his dirty T-shirt. His eyes closed in wordless ecstasy. The passengers looked away. ^{See contrasting}

As the old man spat the shiny seeds one by one onto the floor, the Saks lady looked out the window. The flashes of light were ^{much like the lens of a camera, you pull back from the specific close-ups to a closing general picture.} evenly spaced in the black void of the tunnel. Newark would be the next stop.

--Diane L. Parisi

The low-key ending is effective.

Diane, you obviously feel confident about combining sense descriptions into a sustained image. You should feel confident; this is well done. I predict that you will have a good time applying descriptive techniques to further narrative assignments.

Creating a Sustained Image of a Place

Students move from the writing of descriptive paragraphs to the creating of a sustained image that presents a setting and an attitude/mood about a place by selecting relevant descriptive details that reinforce the mood.

Creating a Sustained Image: Narrative Assignment #2

Choose a place which has significance for you and write about it so that your readers will realize it with their senses and at the same time understand your attitude about it. Remember two things: 1) "Show, don't tell." 2) Choose a one-time, one-place situation.

Once again you will meet in small groups to share your writing with the option to revise based on the suggestions received in small group and in written comments from the instructor.

Following are some representative papers to give you beginning ideas of ways this assignment has been accomplished in the past.

THE VEGETABLE COUNTER

I pushed open the heavy wood door and came face to face with a ferocious dog. The legs on one side were too long so he leaned. He balanced only because the opposite ear and eye were sewn on too low. This was the "entertainment" provided for these people -- stuffing animals.

This is a vivid impression.

As I walked down the hall to Grandma's room, I peeked in a door to see a shriveled turnip, who had once been a young woman like me,

I understand that you are trying to emphasize the narrator's apprehension, but the inclusion of the phrase is awkward. Go ahead and develop the idea of fearing that you, too, will be like the old woman or drop the shoe.

-- There is no clear reference for "these people" because you have not yet let the reader know that the narrator is entering a nursing home.

lying in a heap on her bed. She can't be alive, I thought.

Grandma was waiting for me in the hall by her door. At her mouth she shakily held a Kleenex -- she drooled. One side of her face had been partially paralyzed by a stroke.

I suppose she said, "Hello, Marilyn dear." But I really couldn't tell, she was crying so.

Her wheelchair was easy to push. It hardly seemed to have a passenger. While some people get old and fat, Grandma weighed less than I had weighed for four years. *Do you need this information about other people?*
meaning is lost here -

I pushed her down the hall toward the dining room. On the way I kept up a steady stream of conversation not only to entertain her, but to avoid the problem of understanding what she said.

I wheeled Grandma next to Mom at the table then took my place opposite them. After our prayer of thanks, the plates were brought. The turkey was a fibrous old tom but the mushy dressing made up for its dryness. We were given a choice of lukewarm milk or water to drink. *It appears that you're saying that the dressing is dry.*

In front of each place setting was a lopsided marshmallow turkey with a toothpick-gumdrop head -- another pastime for the patients.

Grandma's bib was splattered with food by the time we finished the meal; a bundle of soppy Kleenex wet the tablecloth beside her plate. However poorly she did it, Grandma fed herself. *This sentence implies a minute sense of admission for the grandmother.*

The rest of the afternoon I spent roaming the corridors, looking at the dolls sitting on the heat registers. Their heads were made

from whole peeled apples, appropriately dry and wrinkled. *I like the subtlety of your metaphor.*

your description would have more impact and convey more confidence in the reader if you described through actions and dialogue the sense of quietly relief allowing the reader to make the inference.

At last the patients were wheeled their supper dishes and it was time for the visitors to leave. Our whole family seemed somewhat guiltily relieved when the door separated us from the vegetable counter. *The vegetable counter reference may be too strong here.*

--Marilyn Anderson *Perhaps the title is enough. What do you think?*

"THE FLOORBOARDS ARE PARALLEL...."

In the math room the desks surrounding me were placed in straight, geometrical order. All the windows were open exactly one and three-fourths feet. The walls were drab and colorless, the only spots of color being the bulletin board lined with geometrical designs, and a yellow fly-catcher hanging from a pipe near the ceiling. The room smelled faintly of chalk dust and nervous perspiration.

Seating myself at the desk, I glared at the red letters lining the bulletin board. "Enjoy geometry in everyday life," they said. I laughed, secretly sneering at the words; and to my surprise, the colorful pictures sneered back at me. "You're stupid, just plain stupid! Geometry is simple if you're smart like us." I stuck out my tongue at them before turning to face the teacher.

"The first thing we will do today is hand back the tests you took yesterday. This test was too easy, though, because someone got one hundred percent." Wouldn't you know some stupid, I mean smart, geometry fan would have to get one hundred percent, I thought, glaring jealously at the suspected pupil.

The personification heightens the aggressiveness of the surroundings

why use passive voice here?

You're doing a good job of making every
The neatly stacked test papers lying *descriptions*
exactly in the middle of the instructor's desk *a precise*
were handed out. Shakily, I looked through my *one in*
row's test papers to find my grade. One *geometric*
hundred percent, eighty-eight percent, ninety *terms.*
percent, sixty-five percent..."That's mine!"

"And now I will read off the grades.
Julie Anderson...one hundred percent. Carol
Larson...ninety-two percent. Barbara Sanders...
eighty-eight percent. Kathy Newdigger...
eighty-one percent, and, Alice, what happened
to you?"

I was so mad that I felt like crying, but
I knew if I did, my tears would probably run
down my cheeks in parallel lines. This thought
made me laugh out loud. *Beautiful line!*

"Alice, if I had a grade like yours, I
certainly wouldn't be laughing."

"Miss Johnson, I wasn't laughing about my
grade; I was laughing about my tears." I
spoke quite sincerely.

Giving me a long look, Miss Johnson *Good use of a*
clomped *visual*
back to my desk, which was, of course, perpendi- *verb-*
cular to the floorboards.

"Turn to page eighty-three. Your assignment
is on the board. You may start on it now,"
she announced in her precise, clipped speech.

"Assignment for tomorrow," I read. "Find
and name as many geometrical patterns as you
can in this room."

The windows are parallel to each other;
the floorboards are parallel; the wood on the
blackboard is parallel; the chalk is a straight
line; the desks are in a straight line; there
are geometrical patterns in Miss Johnson's

dress; the letters are parallel on the bulletin board; the lights are parallel, and...

--Jean Mussehl

The ellipsis is an effective way of ending the description with a sense of the narrator being overwhelmed and hemmed in by the constraints.

WHY AM I HERE?

We were turning off the gravel road and into the driveway, also made of gravel but more sparsely spread than the compact gravel of the road. There to the west of the driveway squatted the gray house wrapped loosely in ribbed gray shingles. A small open porch faced the road, the porch that had been used, if at all, only in the presence of company. The two windows on the left of the porch and the single one on the right seemed to stare at us with blank, expressionless eyes. The giant-like weeping willow in the front yard reduced the cracker box house to even smaller proportions.

I like the personified characteristic you give to the house.

My sister and her boyfriend, who had arrived a few minutes before us, were already out of their car and walking slowly around the yard. As we got out of the car, Mother remarked on how run-down the place seemed to be.

"That's what happens when a place isn't lived in," I remarked to no one in particular.

My two younger brothers promptly raced off on a tour of the farm buildings, yelling to each other about how funny it ~~is~~ to see only the garage roof left sitting on the ground at such an odd angle.

"In a couple of weeks they'll have all the buildings torn down and the ground all plowed," my father quietly stated.

The lines of dialogue are smoothly blended with the surrounding descriptions.

I glanced at him, but I couldn't tell whether or not he really minded what was happening to the farm he had once run so carefully. He seemed unconcerned but I sensed that he resented, just a little, what had happened to the farm.

As I stepped onto the narrow sidewalk that ran from the driveway to the east door, I thought back to the time when we had put it *you use specific* in. It had seemed a novelty to have a real *descriptions* cement sidewalk. In the winter, the downward *quite well* slope became so icy that it sometimes couldn't *to trigger* be used and we had to go around it. *memories.*

Once inside the house, I felt its closeness shut out the cold wind and the unpleasantness of the snow. I looked about inside. I was *Can you show* shocked at the great change that had taken *rather than* place. Instead of shutting out everything, *state shock?* the door had invited *and* dirt and all the elements of the outside world. *The generalization is less effective than specific details would be.*

"Look at how dingy everything is!" exclaimed Mother. "I never thought it could get this bad!"

My little mother had always prided herself in keeping the house as neat and clean as she possibly could, with the place as run-down as it had been. "Oh, look, they've taken out the sink!" she exclaimed.

The narrator's line of dialogue seems
 "The rooms seem so much smaller; maybe *disconnected* it's because I'm bigger now, or because there *here. Perhaps* isn't any furniture," I concluded. "I never *you could* realized it was this tiny before." *before it with some description.*

I thought back to all the family gatherings and get-togethers. The delicious smell of meat being cooked and fresh-baked pies filled the kitchen. The boistrous cousins and the restraining aunts and uncles seemed present,

giving the house a warm glow. It faded away to quiet, old, bare, and broken-down. *The final sentence of this paragraph*

Why did I ever decide to come? I asked *quite an effective sense of contrast.* myself. I could have been at the show having a good time. But no, I had to see it just one last time. To remember it as it had been when we left would have been better than this.

As I gazed about the room, my eyes searched out the stairway pushed into the west wall of the room. I gingerly climbed the narrow stairs and joined my father who had gone up before me. There came a startled exclamation from the top of the stairs. I reached the top step and stared around me with disbelieving eyes. *necessary?* The plaster had been stripped from the walls and only the outside boards remained. Boards had been thrown about at every angle, some with the nails sticking up through them. The musty, dying lumber was full proof of what *close repetition* was happening to the house. It had been slowly dying all these years and in its last weeks, it didn't seem to be putting up any kind of struggle.

As we walked back down and out to the car, I looked up at Dad, "It wasn't ever like that, ever, was it?"

"No," he replied slowly. "It was never like that."

--Jane Severson

Jane, you've used specific descriptions of the house in its present state to contrast with earlier memories the narrator has -- most effective.

Making a Character Come Alive

Although characters may have been present in the five sense descriptions and the sustained images, the creating of realistic characters now has the main emphasis.

Students need to make their characters seem like individual people, not stereotypes. The instructor can help them in this goal by leading a discussion prior to giving a character sketch assignment. The discussion should center on the usage of point of view. Students can be asked what methods they know for creating a character. The ensuing discussion needs to bring out the following ways:

1. Direct explanations, telling statements -- probably the least effective as they rob the reader of the chance to make inferences.
2. Descriptions (physical attributes, actions, suggestions of emotions), details that imply traits of the character -- probably the most effective as they encourage the reader to make inferences.
3. Use of surroundings of a person to show the reader what the character is like. The setting may be a habitual one for the character or an alien one to her/him.
4. Thoughts of the character.
5. Reactions to other people/from other people.

6. Talk of the character.

7. Another person's talk about the character.

(Numbers 4-7 prompt the introduction of point of view: what choices there are, advantages and disadvantages of each one, punctuation of dialogue and interior monologue, the need for consistency in point of view, and how violations of point of view occur.)

The following handout is given to students. The representative character sketches are used as the basis for discussion, a sharing of the strengths and weaknesses in how the characters are created.

Making a Character Come Alive: Narrative Assignment #3

Write a character sketch which emphasizes one basic trait. Make your character come alive in a one-time, one-place situation. Draw upon what you know about using sensory details, the creating of a setting, and methods of characterization to aid you in this assignment. Your writing will be shared in small groups with opportunities for revising as has been done for the past two assignments. Representative papers are again included for class discussion.

BECAUSE HE WAS DIFFERENT

He was different from most boys. Oh, I don't mean queer or perverted, just different in little things. He was always so nice and polite, but he was all boy. He played basketball, football, and baseball and things like that. He loved cars and especially liked to tinker with their engines. On, he was all boy all right.

But he was different, different about life, all life. He cared what happened to people, and plants, and animals. He cared about life.

I sat on the porch swing and watched him in the front yard. He roamed around the lawn as if he were looking for something. He stopped suddenly and cocked his head as if to

Some readers might think the first two paragraphs are comprised of unnecessary telling statements that stand outside of the one-time, one-place situation. What do you think? Who you need them?

close repetition -- what would be the effect if you directly said looking for something... to hear something?

hear something, but he was looking toward the ground. He then slowly bent, picked something up, and rose again.

He cupped something in both hands and held it up to his cheek. A small fuzzy tail and a tiny pink nose peeked through his hands. When he turned to one side, I could see that the object was a small baby rabbit. He cuddled and caressed the bunny and let it nibble on his fingertips.

He sat down on the ground and placed the baby rabbit in the soft, luscious grass. The bunny hopped about, in and around and under his feet and legs.

The incident happened so suddenly that *why wouldn't* even I was a little surprised at the results. *the narrator be surprised?* A large tabby cat came hurtling across the yard and lunged at the bunny. He must have heard the snap of the bunny's neck, for he let out a cry and picked up a nearby branch. The branch whistled through the air and landed with a crack on the tabby's back. The cat screamed in pain and raced away.

For a moment he stood there, stunned and silent. I knew the bunny was dead, but I said nothing and just waited on the swing. He ~~seemed to have come out of his trance and~~ *These minor changes would tighten the winding here.* stooped down, ~~He knelt beside the bunny, and~~ held out his hand for me to join him.

I rose slowly from the swing and walked toward him. I took his hand and knelt beside him. He picked up the lifeless form. The pained look on his face faded as he laid the bunny down again.

He turned toward me and tears sprang to his eyes, threatening to overflow. Then he cried, and I cried...because he was different. *The ending is an effective one for emphasizing the sensitivity of both the boy and the narrator. I can see that you need something in the opening to trigger the because he was different line. Play with the opening and see what you can work out.*

--Diana Ownsby

A FRIEND TO THE DEAD

This is a
long, complex
paragraph.
You might
look for
some
natural
breaking
places.

"We will all die some day," he would say, "and when it does happen, I will arrange the funeral and take care of the other details as needed." I could see his gray marble body *your descriptive details beautifully* standing in the entrance of his black velvet *emphasize the* parlor as he invited the bereaved family in to *coldness of the* look at his work. His famous words slid out *men and his* of his mouth and floated into the workroom *comfortableness* where they clouded my mind as I tried so hard *with his* to ignore them. If it ~~wasn't~~ *surroundings* for my mother, I would have left him weeks ago, but she insisted that I stay and help him after the death of his poor wife. She said that he would be in much grief and would need help at work. Even though I knew it was a favor to Mother, I *it appears that being* still felt like I was an important part of his *part of the plan* plan to bury the whole town. Outside of the *is the favor to* workroom where I sat polishing an oaken box, *Mother.* the thump of the closing door sounded. My uncle stood smiling and patted the side of the coffin waiting to be smoothed. He glanced at me with ice blue eyes while the rest of him faded into the purple velvet curtains. The coldness that came from him was as frigid as the markers being displayed outside, and he was as dead as the people he had persuaded to die. I felt a lump in my throat as I thought *you make use* of how he must have tortured his wife with *of a fact for* talk of dying until she felt weak to his *characterization.* wishes and became one of his victims. Again I *This is a* looked at him. His teeth glittered like snow *sophisticated* as he grinned, "Someday you will make a fine *usage.* mortician," came his frozen voice, "a fine mortician." I would rather die. Either way, he would be happy.

--Julie Breiten

Julie, you don't have to be told that the last two sentences are priceless -- so nicely done. You have most definitely emphasized the basic trait of the uncle and the perceptiveness of the narrator.

A sheet-laden music stand leaned on wobbly legs against a full-length mirror which hung on the wall. The musician stood looking at himself, feet slightly apart, violin tucked under his chin, bow poised on open strings. "Pianissimo," he whispered. It was his own composition he was playing tonight.

The image is so clear I can easily picture the reflected scene.

The first notes, though sweet and soft, were painfully awkward and the light unsure strokes gave a muffled tone. He closed his eyes and thought about the long hours of solitary practice, going over the same phrases again and again, perfecting trills and vibratos, memorizing passages. He recalled the first concert and how his fingers were paralyzed when he forgot an entire passage.

But gradually there was an improvement in the melody. The music was delicate and gentle, steadily building up to a crescendo. Here and there, though, he could detect notes that didn't really fit the piece. Faster and faster he played with uncontrolled passion when suddenly at the highest note, the bow jerked to a stop.

the movement of the descriptions increases along with the character's feelings. You use structure to reinforce ideas.

He opened his eyes and saw the lean hollow expression of a lonely man carrying a violin. They were a part of each other; their songs had been the same. She was the only woman in his life now. He could caress her dark curved body with his thin but strong fingers and make her sing with ecstasy or moan with pain, something he could never do with the other woman. "Pianissimo," he whispered again; the violin cried mournfully.

You really know how to build complexity into the description, making the reader sense the sometimes loneliness and pain of being human.

The last sentence emphasizes the communicating relationship of the musician and the instrument.

--Kim Normura

Coping with Conflict

After developing techniques and skills associated with two of the four elements of the form of fiction (setting and character), it is time to deal with the third element, plot. An organic plot evolves from the writer's material, and it lives and grows. Central to the plot is conflict. The character, created to evoke the reader's interest and understanding, is placed in a situation which stimulates her/him to act in accordance with a basic trait as s/he expends some effort to handle the situation. Regardless of whether the conflict is person vs. person, person vs. environment, or person vs. self, the conflicts played out in the plot are always connected to the writer's underlying perceptions of the universal questions of human existence.

Student representative papers on the following handout may be used to prompt large group discussion of the strengths and weaknesses displayed as writers attempt to show a character coping with conflict.

Coping with Conflict: Narrative Assignment #4

Write a short narrative in which you control a plot.

Within the plot, show whether a character discovers a new insight, changes an attitude, and/or succeeds or fails in a particular desire. Your writing will be shared in a small group with opportunities provided for revising.

"I JUST KNOWED"

She stood over the tub of dishes, with one hand in the water and one on a cup of coffee.

"The moon's awful pretty over the field tonight. Everything's so still."

"Yup," mumbled her husband without even looking up from his newspaper.

"The sky is so clear and the moon is so bright; I can see everything from here to the big oak tree," the woman replied as she stared out the window.

The man brought his deeply sun-tanned *The dialectic* hand to his face and rubbed the whisker stubble *variances* on his chin. "It's purdy, alright. Real *in dialogue* purdy, Sarah." He turned another page of the *are nicely* paper and creased it down the center. The *handled.* slow, rhythmical creaking of the wooden rocker resumed.

"It's been a fine year for us, hasn't it, Joe?" She took her eyes from the field and looked into the hard face of her husband.

"The Lawd's been good to us, if that's what ya mean, Sarah."

With both hands deep into the water, the woman attacked the supper bean kettle. "Oh, the meal's scorched to the sides of the pan again!" Sara drew a disgusted breath.

Joe's eyes continued to crawl down the Farm Page. He always read the farm news with extra caution. Joe took pride in being able to recite a portion of the weekly market report.

"Well, lookee here, Sarah. Old Sam Jenkins is sellin' out. I just knowed..." He reached into his breast pocket and pulled out his pipe and a well-worn bag of tobacco. "...he couldn't make a go of it."

A dish clanged against the side of the wash tub.

"I bet my hands are rougher than those any woman in town from scubbing pots and pans."

"You know, Sarah, if Sam woulda saved some of his farmin' money..." Joe stuffed a wad of tobacco into the old pipe.

"What do you suppose caused this scorching, Joe?" Sarah picked up the black pan and shoved it in front of her husband's face.

"I don't know, Sarah." Joe answered, shaking his head slowly from side to side.

*you display a
typical husband/
of wife conversation
in which neither
one is really
interesting with
the other.*

"We know I'm a good cook. We know that for sure, don't we, Joe?"

"Yes, Sarah. We know that for sure."

"It can't be the pots and pans. I use the iron ones we got from your folks for our wedding."

"Our weddin'? Remember our weddin', Sarah? I can still see old Parson Tenning in that stiff black gown." He lit his pipe and stuck it in the corner of his mouth. "Wonder what became of him?"

"Do you think it could be the pots and pans, Joe?"

"Our weddin' was some years back, Sar. Maybe it is those pans..."

"No. It's not the pans. I'm sure it's not the pans, Joe. But you know I don't know much about fire. Maybe it's got something to do with uneven heat. What do you think, Joe?"

Joe stopped rocking. "No, I'm sure it's not the pans. Ma woulda picked out the best for our weddin'.

"I mean about the uneven heat!"

"Uneven heat?" Joe put his pipe on the table and scratched his head. "Maybe it's the stove."

what a conniver this lady is!

"Joe, I bet that's it. You tracked that down in a hurry." She pulled her hands from the greasy water and dried them on her apron. She quickly smoothed her hair and straightened the sleeves on her dress.

Sarah walked over to the rocker and gave her husband a hug. "I've heard that farmers are the smartest men on earth," she teased.

Joe beamed. "You know, Sarah, it's got to be the stove. I know you're a good cook and it couldn't be those pans."

"Do you think it's beyond repair, Joe?"

"Well, I don't know." He stood up, and with his hands deep in his pockets, he examined the controls along the side. *Your sense of timing is excellent.*

Sarah slipped her arm around his thick waist. "Look here, Joe. This burner's loose, the top is discolored, the oven's heating element is funny. What do you think, Joe?" *The build-up of the interaction is so nicely done.*

"This stove ain't in too good of condition," Joe announced, very sure of himself. *You made me laugh out loud while I'm reading.*

Sarah tightened her hold around Joe. "If this stove is beyond repair, what should be done?"

There was a pause. A drop of water fell from the faucet and plunked into the dish pan. *Again, your timing is beautiful.*

"Oh, look, Joe. The moon's still shining over our field. I guess that's kind of a reminder to everyone that we've had a good year, uh, Joe?"

"I reckon, Sarah. Seeings we got a new general store in town, the church took in four new members, the..." *The interruption is so realistic, so smoothly created.*

"I mean us, Joe. I mean you and me."

"You know, Sarah, I think we have had a good year." He reached around his waist for his wife's hand. "How would you like..." He paused. "How would you like a new stove?"

Sarah looked into Joe's eyes. "Oh, Joe. You mean I'm going to get a new stove? Oh, Joe!" She leaned up and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

Joe hung his head and kicked the leg of the table nervously.

"Oh, Joe. I never expected this." *yeah, sure...*

He straightened up, put his hands on his hips, and took one long look at the stove.

"I figured it was the stove all along. I knowed you're a good cook, and I just knowed it weren't Ma's iron pots and pans."

Susan, you should submit this for publication. This is a high quality piece of writing, and even more, it is a sign of great understanding of the workings of a clever planner.

THE SIX-DOLLAR HEART ATTACK

It was almost over; I was in the process of finishing the last few days of four memorable years at Dubuque Senior High School. *you cause each reader to spend*

Half awake, slumped over my first-period desk, I wearily devoted about one-fourth of my *a few moments in reserve* attention to the morning's announcements coming over the P.A. system. The other three-fourths of my attention shifted back and forth *happens aren't needed* from a cloudy-headed feeling caused by getting up too early, to the lustful fantasies I was having about a well-endowed but simple-minded girl sitting across the room from me.

This overblown line seems appropriate.
My soul was overflowing with the symptoms of senioritis. My half-opened eyes drifted to graffiti inscribed into my desk top. "Putenson sucks," it said, referring to our school dean. My attention switched back to the

loudspeaker, hearing the voice of our foreign exchange student from Chile announcing an upcoming IRC bake sale, "Our beeksale ees so good to come to. Veosit een room 106A and eat yourself a super-delicious donut to buy money for the IRC."

From here on, the sense of dialogue loses the sense of accent with which it began.

Directly behind me one of the class grease-balls was trying his best to explain how he wrecked his "fuck'n '68 Ford LTD against a fuckin' phone pole." His sloppily dressed, empathetic listener shook his head and replied, "Aw fuck." *This is a good example of the linguistic versatility of the*

I was in the midst of studying a pair of *adolescent* gracefully contoured legs attached to a *"grease-ball"* senuous looking, dark-haired female classmate, when the school's bookkeeper shrilled over the loudspeaker, "Don't forget to get your \$2.50 for your cap and gown fees into the business office in a sealed envelope by fourth period today." By some miracle, before I staggered off to school that morning I had managed to shake the cobwebs from my head long enough to remember to put \$2.50 into a sealed envelope and bring it with me.

At the announcement's conclusion, our sociology teacher flicked off the buzzing fluorescent lights and showed our class a series of unrelated slides entitled Who Am I? The darkened room was illuminated by the image of a Scandinavian-looking girl with long blonde hair seated in the middle of an endless field of grass, "rapping" with us about how "groovy" her relationship with her boyfriend was. She was starting to talk about how the two of them had pre-marital sex when my eyelids began to feel as if they were weighted with lead. The quietness of the dark-enshrouded room, coupled with the morning's scrambled eggs settling in my stomach, made me feel very relaxed. The soft words of the girl in the

slide presentation soothed me with a delicate, rhythmic quality. I felt so warm, so comfortable.

You do a nice job of describing the setting and its effects on the character.

All of a sudden the bell rang. The lights flashed on, causing me to leap reflexively from my seat. I noticed that I wasn't the only one who had drifted off during the course of the hour; approximately half the class was squinting and rubbing its eyes.

I grabbed my sealed envelope with my \$2.50 in it and rushed down the crowded stairs to Mrs. Jacobson's window. She marched up to the opening; she wore square-framed glasses with a gold chain draped around the shoulders connecting the earpieces. Her jet black hair was piled high upon her forehead as if it were a beehive. Somehow I remembered some gossip I had heard recently, pertaining to an affair she was supposed to be having, and I thought to myself, How gross!

I handed her my \$2.50 in a sealed envelope. "What's this for?" she barked.

"It's my two-fifty in a sealed envelope for my cap and gown fees," I replied, feeling somewhat like Ritchie Cunningham on Happy Days. *Your usage of the Happy Days line dates the description! Does that matter?*

"Well," she shot back, "You know it is supposed to say 'Cap and Gown' on the envelope."

why does this particular line of dialogue make
"Oh, I am so sorry," I said, feeling more the narrator and more like Ritchie Cunningham. I grabbed a pen and scribbled 'Cap and Gown' on the envelope *feel more like* and handed it back to her. *Cunningham?*

Just as I was about to disappear down the hall, I heard her warn, "Just a minute, I have to check and see if there are any unpaid fees on your record to be taken care of before you can graduate." She shuffled through her

good adjective usage—

sacred little strongbox and came up with a scrap of paper. "You owe two cents."

I laughed, thinking the old biddy finally had gotten a sense of humor and said, "I wonder how that got there."

Still flipping through her strongbox, she muttered, "You'd better pay it now, so you can graduate."

Unaware that she was serious, I mentioned, "I only have a dollar in my pocket, and I don't want 98 cents change jingling in it all day."

Her middle-aged face turned beet red. Faint traces of smoke trickled from her eyes. "Well, I haven't got all day, pay me!"

→ This word is usually used to describe liquid.

Here I was, a senior, ranked in the top tenth of my class, a member of the National Honor Society, a letter winner, editor of the yearbook, and I thought to myself, My God, I don't have to take any of that sort of crap from some stingy old bitch going through her change in life! vivid line—

what a set of credentials!

"Forget it!" I snapped back. All visions of Ritchie Cunningham disappeared. "This is the most stupid thing I've ever seen." I turned and walked down the hall, leaving a group of giggling underclassmen crowded around her window.

I think this Cunningham is overdone.

Later that day while trimming the white borders off some pictures for the yearbook, I felt a stiff poke on my shoulder. I turned and looked up from my desk; there she was.

Nice sense of timing—

She treated us to a five-minute lecture about how it was her God-sent duty to collect all fees, no matter how small, and how if everybody owed two cents it would add up.

I thought for a moment and whispered to a friend as she left the room, "About six dollars." *effective closing-*

--Phil Hutchison

TOOK

Stripped to the waists of their tattered blue jeans, the three boys gamboled along the gravel road beside the river bank. They stopped every now and then to skip rocks along the surface of the murky water, anxiously counting the number of times each rock emerged from the green-brown river.

"Ha!" Roy laughed, slapping Earl across the shoulder. "That's a skip if I ever seen one. Six times, man! Can't nobody beat that!"

Earl shrugged away, wrinkling up his nose scornfully. "Aw, that ain't nothin'. Gimme a chance; I'll skip it seven easy."

"Me, too, man, me too! I can beat that," Tookey said eagerly, puffing as he bent to scoop up some rocks in his chubby hands.

This minor change makes it apparent that the opening line modifies the boys' expressions Faces twisted to concentration, the boys skillfully flicked pebble after pebble into the water.

"...Four, five, SIX!" Earl counted as his rock went plopping along the surface. *The dialogue is skillfully intermingled with the descriptive tag lines.* "Six, Roy, man. Least I got you tied." Earl smiled proudly. "Now all I need is one more -- then I got you beat." He stopped to pick up more ammunition.

"Say, Took!" Roy called, flashing a smug grin. "How you doin' over there? You got two yet, or are you still workin' on one?"

Earl and Roy broke into spasms of laughter as they watched Tookey's comical but sincere efforts.

"Hey, man!" Roy yelled, chuckling. "Just give it up. Can't none of us beat six no how."

"Yeah, Took," Earl echoed. "Just give it up. We got lots better to do than sit and watch you huff and puff all day over them rocks."

Another fit of laughter came on; Roy and Earl rolled in the grass, nearly choking with merriment.

Tookey sat on the bank, head bent, watching his plump hands fiddling with the pebbles on the ground. Aimlessly, he began to toss the stones in the river, and the round, smooth faces of the pebbles laughed at him, too.

No, not no more, he thought to himself. They ain't gonna make no fool out of me no more.

He stood up. "Hey y'all! Betcha I can beat both of y'all to the other side of the river."

"Huh?" Roy said, just recovered from his recent outburst. "What you talkin' about?" he yelled, looking at Tookey with a confused frown. "You know there ain't no swimmin' allowed in this river."

"What's the matter?" Tookey asked in a challenging tone. "Y'all scared or somethin'?"

Adrienne, you build the conflict between Roy and Earl, among the three boys, and within Tookey in a very sophisticated manner, handling the three levels of complexity with skill.

"Heck no, we ain't scared of nothin'," Earl said, standing up and walking toward Tookey. "Come on, Roy," he urged. "We'll show him somethin'."

Three pairs of blue jeans lay on the bank as the boys dived simultaneously into the cloudy, stinking river. There was a huge splash as Tookey belly-flopped into the water. Roy and Earl swam abreast of each other, avoiding the clinging water plants that reached for them with long green fingers. Tookey labored along behind them, gasping for air like an asthmatic, moving frantically as he tried to catch up.

"We ain't got...much...farther...to go...do we, Roy?" Earl managed to say between breaths.

"'Bout hundred yards," Roy wheezed in reply.

"Come on...Let's leave 'im." They put on an extra burst of speed, soon making it to the shallow water of the opposite shore. Chests heaving, they dragged themselves from the river and rested on the bank.

"Woo-oo," Roy let out a long breath. "Here we are."

"Yeah...and he's still out there," Earl said, straining to see Tookey's splashes in the water of the river. He scanned the surface, seeing nothing but the usual peaceful ripples as far as his vision could reach. "Hey, man, he's not there." Excited, he exclaimed, "He must of got caught in them plants and went under!"

They both dived back in the water. In a frenzy, they retraced their path and searched for him until they were too tired to go farther.

Once again they rested on the river bank. "Aw, I knew we shouldn't of done it," Roy said, covering his face with his hands and shaking his head. "What we gonna do now? He's out there somewhere and we can't find 'im." He stood up and paced nervously along the bank, trying to swallow past the lump in his throat.

"Man, I don't know; I just don't know," Earl almost sobbed. I wish we hadn't of made him do it. I wanna take it all back and make it like it was."

"He was our friend, man," Roy said, rubbing his wrist across his wet eyes. "And he's gone. Now we gotta get some help and own up to what we done."

Earl nodded, and sniffing, he rose to take one last look across the surface of the river. "I didn't know it'd be this way. I didn't mean no harm."

Roy gently pulled his arm. "Come on, Earl. We gotta get our clothes. We gotta go."

Suddenly, there was a loud rustle from the bushes behind them. There were sounds of twigs snapping under heavy feet.

"Hey, these what y'all want?" Tookey asked, emerging from the leaves and holding out two pairs of wet jeans.

"What took y'all so long? I been here and back twice and y'all just now barely makin' it once."

--Adrienne Alston

The reader experiences both relief and amusement in your carefully constructed ending. You display a writer's skill for creating realistic dialogue, a tension within the plot, and an effective denouement.

Writing a Major Narrative

Before student writers are asked to create a major narrative with an underlying theme, they need to discover a deeper meaning of the concept of theme than that of a moralizing message or a thematic category. Any author writes in response to a universal question, one that presents an aspect of the human condition. It is probable that writers begin by describing specific situations rather than saying to themselves, "What is the statement about life that I wish to convey?" However, out of the specific situations statements about life may arise. These statements are connected to questions that are universal and open-ended, questions that are answerable at many levels yet ultimately unanswerable, questions that reflect aspects of the writer's life even though the writing may not be an account of her/his actual experience.

The instructor can pose the following hypothetical situation to students as an activator to the assignment of writing a major narrative: Assume that within the next thirty minutes an omniscient person will enter the room, a person capable of answering any question you might raise. In the next ten minutes, write down ten questions you would ask. The questions should be ones you would really like to find the answers to, questions

you care enough about to explore, questions about which you might be willing to write.

Although it first appears too time consuming, students will profit from sharing their written questions aloud while the instructor keeps a running list of the questions on the blackboard.

Following are some typical responses from several composition classes.

What will I be doing twenty years from now?

Who are the people who will most drastically affect my life?

What is there to dread and/or look forward to after we live our lives on Earth?

How much potential do I have/for what things?

Why am I the person that I am now?

Is there a supreme being?

What could I have done to change myself for the better?

What efforts of mine are being wasted?

What do I really want out of life?

How and when will I die and will anyone remember me?

When is the world coming to an end?

Is there life on any other planet?

Why is there so much violence in the world today?

Will there be a food shortage within the next five years?

Will I succeed in life?

Will I marry?

Will I be a better writer?

Will there be a cure for cancer?

How can I help others?

Will I be healthy my life long?

Will I pass my final exams?

Why don't UFO's identify themselves?

Was J.F.K. killed by Oswald alone?

Will mankind learn to live in peace and
harmony?

Why is money so sacred to some people?

What makes people believe?

What makes people hate each other?

Is it right to have children?

How long will my new car last?

How can you tell if you're insane?

Will the Vikings ever win a Super Bowl?

Is humanity advancing, staying the same,
or regressing?

Will I have money to continue school?

Do people have souls?

Is there such a thing as pure good?

Do I have the right to take a life?
Why does time go so fast?
Will there be another world war?
Where did life begin?
Why is government so corrupt?
Is predestination real?
What does it mean to be a follower, a leader?
Why ask questions?
Will my sister ever be able to see?
What are angels?
How was the world created?
What stocks should I invest in?
Would you come back later when I think up
more questions?

Students and instructor alike are impressed with the uniqueness of their personal questions and the commonality of their concerns. All people, regardless of culture and environment, are alike in their need to find answers to basic questions: What is real? How can I survive as a human being? How do I deal with my potential for violence? What is right? How can I cope with the reality of death as a part of life? Who am I? A sophisticated definition of theme allows students to act on their recognition of these shared questions. Theme is generated

from story; it is not drawn or constructed from prior categories or preconceived adages. It must be seen as an individual writer's implied response to her/his search for personal answers to universal questions.²

On the day following the activator, students can respond to examples of major narratives read aloud. The three representative student writings included following the next assignment sheet can be used as examples for class discussion. Students should explore the examples by applying the symbol process and determining the writer's statement about life and how the statement is related to the six basic questions stated above.

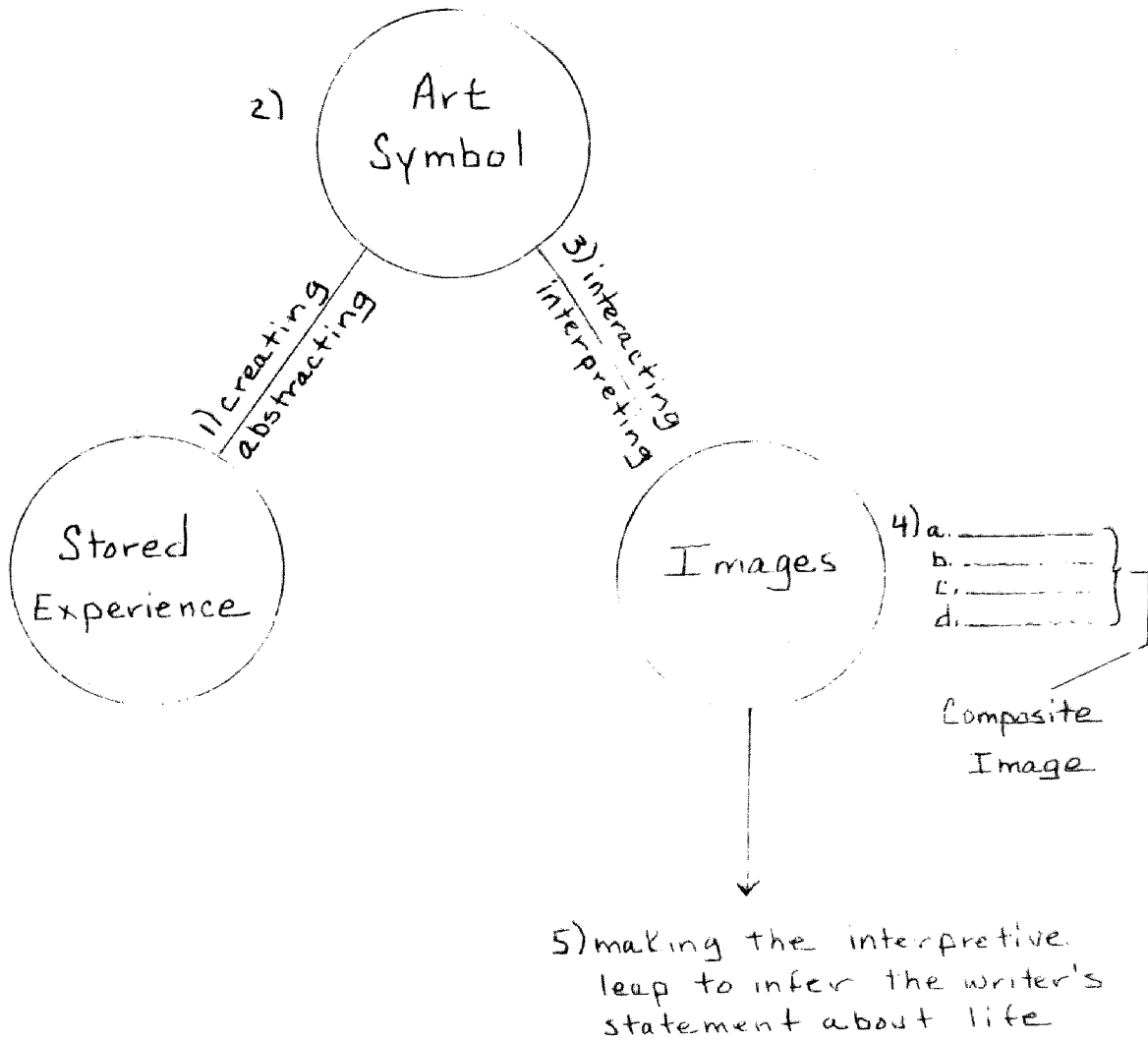
The symbol process is a visual structure that both a writer and an evaluator can consciously use until it is internalized. The structure is a refinement of the sender-message-receiver model often used in speech classes; applied to writing, the structure emphasizes the translation process shared by both the creator and the evaluator.

All art involves translation. The artist translates personal meaning into symbol (impression to expression), and the interpreter translates symbol into personal meaning. A structure which can assist interpretation must, then, be linked to the process of translation.

² Bell and Shaffer, pp. 15-25.

The symbol process is actually drawn out in a visual form as an aid for the student evaluator in interpreting the major narratives s/he is hearing read aloud. Following is a diagram of the structure picturing the process of translation for both creator and interpreter.

Figure 1: Symbol Process



If there is a breakdown in the process, it can be the creator's fault (the images s/he builds do not reflect the intended meaning) or the interpreter's fault (interpretive base is not rich enough to judge what is being presented), and/or sometimes a shared fault -- particularly when both are new at the processes. It may seem awkward and rigid to have students actually draw out this structure for each written evaluation, but it is a means of concretely working with an abstract process. The symbol process oversimplifies so that students may better understand complexities. When the process is internalized and becomes a natural series of steps in evaluation, it will no longer be necessary to literally draw out the structure.

Through the use of this structure, students begin to see the value of an audience willing and capable of serving as critics of their writing. If the majority of the evaluators can identify no distinct images, the writer knows that descriptive detail is missing from the writing. If the majority of the evaluators cannot give the writer's statement about life, the writer knows that the images created do not lead to an underlying idea. If a majority of the evaluators state an overly simplistic theme, the writer knows that the story is not subtle enough or complex enough to give the reader a new way of seeing.

Writing a Major Narrative: Narrative Assignment #5

Write a narrative in which the elements of setting, characterization, and plot work together to suggest a theme, an underlying idea at once personal and universal about some aspect of the human condition. Your narrative will be read aloud to the entire class by the instructor. Names of the writers will not be given. The evaluation process will be more formal than the verbal exchanges of earlier small groups. For each narrative, you will be asked to give a written evaluation that will include using the symbol process to determine the writer's statement about life. You will be asked to state specific strengths and weaknesses of the writing, giving examples when you can, and to make suggestions for revision. At the end of each period during which narratives are shared, student writers will receive the written evaluations from all class members. The writers will have the opportunity to weigh the revision suggestions and decide whether or not to make changes in the narratives before handing them into the instructor for additional written comments. The writers will then have one more opportunity to revise.

The following checklist is to aid you in writing and/or revising your narrative. You may also find it helpful for your in-class evaluations of others' narratives.

-
1. Title -- does the title provide a provocative lead to the paper?
 2. Do the opening paragraphs catch the reader's interest? Does the writer build immediacy in her/his beginning?
 3. Is the setting presented in showing details? Does the setting aid the reader in understanding the characters and conflicts revealed? Do details of place obscure or overwhelm the other elements in the narrative?
 4. Does the writer create "real" characters with distinct personality traits? Does the writer use dialogue and/or thought to reveal character? Does the writer use non-essential narrative tags? Do personality traits emerge in significant actions?
 5. Is the plot natural, related, organic? Are there non-essential elements in the series of events the writer portrays? Gimmicks or tricks? Do the elements of the plot reveal a significant conflict or series of conflicts?
 6. What is the point of view? Is the point of view consistent? Does verb tense or pronoun usage detract from the control of the writer over the material?
 7. Is the conclusion in keeping with the characters and actions portrayed? Does the ending tag on an unnecessary moral or summary of the story?
 8. Do mechanical errors get in the way of what the writer is trying to say?
 9. What is the theme of the story? How do the components of setting, character and plot work to contribute to the writer's statement about life?

Whenever you have suggestions for alternatives, give them.

Three Representative Major Narrative Papers

A RIDE WITH MAYNARD

I have always said there is only one way to enjoy going anywhere with my kid brother, Maynard. That's to send him separately in a box. Dad says there is probably a law against it, even if we cut air holes for him. So I had to go to Elkhart the hard way, on the bus with Maynard.

I can hear the paws before the punch line and then the applause. You have the timing of a comedian in the first two sentences.

I'm not too sure about Maynard, either. mean, here's this kid from a perfectly normal American family, who's an absolute nut about collecting things. That kid will collect anything; this month it's bottle caps. He takes that stupid bottle cap collection everywhere. My own brother, Maynard the Jerk.

We were just about done packing when I caught Maynard putting his bottle caps in his suitcase. "Mom," I yelled. "Look what he's putting in his suitcase. As old and beat-up as it is, it'll never hold together."

The subtitles throughout the story are really good.

"Stop yelling! Your father is on the phone," Mom yelled from the kitchen. "I told Maynard he could take his bottle caps."

"O.K., Creep, take them; but remember, you're gonna carry them. Not me," I informed him.

We finally arrived at the bus station. What a crummy heap we had to take. Man, I've seen better looking garbage trucks.

Talk about a bad trip. Of course, any trip with Maynard the Time Bomb along isn't exactly fun. I'm not complaining about the trip or anything like that. It's all right going to Grandma's house. What really bugged me was going anywhere with Maynard.

The persona of the narrator is absolutely delightful.

Well, as I was saying, we climbed aboard that beat-up bus headed for Elkhart. It was like climbing into a furnace. Maynard plonked his suitcase down in the aisle and sat next to an old white-haired guy in work clothes. I sat across the aisle. We usually sit that way when we're forced to go anywhere together. We're not exactly anxious to let the world know we're related.

The bus driver got on the bus and barked, *good use of a vivid verb*
 "Whose suitcase is this?"

Maynard just sat there being stupid.

I kicked him on the leg and said, "Hey, Stupid, wake up. He's talking to you."

"It's my suitcase, sir," Maynard the Innocent told the bus driver.

The guy's face was beginning to twitch when he said, "Well, you can't leave it there. You'll have to put it in the rack."

Maynard whined, "I can't lift it; I'm just a little kid, and it's too heavy for me."

"O.K., O.K.," snapped the driver, hurling that old suitcase up to the rack. WHAM! Clothes and bottle caps just seemed to explode all over the bus. Man, the driver's cheeks puffed out like a tuba player's. He opened his mouth but was so mad he couldn't get any words out. Maynard could though. *good line* -

"What'd you do that for?" he bawled.
 "You spilled all my bottle caps, my very best ones; now I'll never get them all back."

I gritted my teeth and hissed, "Cool it, Maynard. You can start a new collection."

"But I want my bottle caps," he screamed.
 I felt a strong urge to break his neck.

People began yelling at the driver that it was way past time to leave, and let's get rolling, and things like that. The driver's cheeks puffed out again.

"O.K., O.K.." he yelled. "We'll leave just as soon as those clothes and bottle caps are picked up off the floor. So everyone start picking up those caps." Then he asked Maynard, "How many did you have, kid?"

"Four hundred," whined Maynard.

The driver's cheeks puffed out again, this time worse than ever. Then he turned to me and asked, "That kid your brother?"

"Yeah, unfortunately," I mumbled.

This one line says it all.

"Well you better keep an eye on him, or I'll throw you both off the bus."

The mini-characterization of the bus driver is a good way to show the effect of Maynard on others besides the narrator.

Just great, we haven't even left the station and already Maynard got us into trouble.

Well, we finally picked up Stupid's clothes and most of his dumb bottle caps, and the bus chugged out of the station. Man, the way that old bus bumped and jerked, I didn't think we'd make it out of town. The air conditioner didn't work. And most of the windows wouldn't go up. Nothing worked on that bus except the driver.

I leaned back in my seat and tried hard not to think of Maynard. What that kid needed was a firm hand, right between the eyes.

The passengers finally quieted down. I must have dozed off because the next thing I knew, the driver was yelling, "Elkhart Lake."

I punched Maynard and said, "Come on, Monster, this is where we get off."

I figured I'd better not take any chances on his suitcase, so I took it off the rack myself. Man, it was like lead. What a goofball Maynard was. The goofball stood up.

As he stepped down past the driver, Maynard the Liar said, "Thank you for the nice ride."

"Yeah," the driver growled. He slammed the door and took off as soon as we cleared the last step, like he thought we might try to get back on that old wreck.

The sun was setting as I kicked Maynard down the block towards Grandma's house. The ordeal was almost over. *You might consider omitting the last sentence, can you see why?*

--Nick Avouglas

Nick, the Holden Caulfield-type voice is a charming one for the narrator to adopt as he reveals the endless struggle of growing up with a brat.

NO PLACE FOR A CHILD

Those loving, big brown eyes stared blankly out the cold distant window. The cruel rain fell, producing a constant rhythmic pattern. There she sat quietly on a wooden stool with her small pudgy hands carefully positioned on her lap. She nervously looked down at her shiny patent leather shoes. Her hand lifted to scratch the baby smooth skin trapped by a stiff white collar. I longed to reach out and tenderly hold her. It was such an odd, peculiar feeling. I cannot explain it logically. Unfortunately, it was not part of my duties as a maid.

your description of the little girl's clothes is an effective means of suggesting her sense of confinement.

I heard echoes of laughter from downstairs. My mind pictured accurately those famous dinner parties in which I participated, doing the dirty work: The cluster of cigar smoke twirling in circles endlessly, the deluxe bar

filled with beverages to the hilt, the half-~~The sustained~~ empty glasses, the long stares, fake smiles, ~~image here~~ sequined gowns, Gucci shoes and handbags, ~~really captures~~ flashing diamonds. Stone faces and heavy ~~the feeling of~~ silent breathing encompass the atmosphere ~~endless parties~~ after the party dies. No place for a child. ~~in plastic~~ ~~atmospheres.~~

usually means fixed, not from making from one object to another
 Her eyes ~~word choice?~~ riveted from the window to the stately grandfather clock, back to a dish of cold forgotten food placed on the table in front of her. There was a familiar schedule which must be followed each day. Her mother kept busy with golf on Tuesdays and Thursdays, followed by lunch with friends, shopping on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, and tea with the P.T.A. on Fridays. For her little girl, the schedule meant getting up before school started to practice the piano, and attending ballet and tap lessons after school ended, leaving her nights filled with dreams and promises of how it might have been.

I lifted the dish from the table. "Weren't ~~let~~ ~~specific~~ ~~descriptions~~ ~~reveal the~~ ~~girl's~~ ~~feelings.~~ you hungry, Miss?"

strange word description for a tear -
 The head sank low from its original position. Her eyes fixed steadily on the dull waxy floor. Her thin lips parted to speak eagerly but closed in disgrace when she found herself unable to express her feelings in words. She quickly wiped a loose tear that caressed her hot cheek. Feelings mounted inside me as I carefully placed my hand on her shaking shoulder.

No time could have been more inappropriate for her mother to march into the room. I sensed her presence without turning or flexing a muscle. Our eyes met in tense ~~overdone -~~ unenjoyment. With a martini occupying one hand, a cigarette in the other, she glared at me in suspicion. She looked remarkably sober, but when she opened her mouth, I knew better.

"J...Justwhatare...youdoing?" *It's difficult to indicate slurred speech. You're doing an effective job of*
 I glanced back to that lonely figure, and hesitantly replied, "Ma'am, if you would just *displaying* pay a little attention..." She broke in with *the woman's* a slightly defensive tone, "Towhatg? Yougspeak-*to say* nonsence tome. Why shouldg I waste my val... *state.* valuable time lishening toyourgable?"

I saw those big brown eyes innocently looking up at her mother's. With teeth gritted, I struggled to complete my sentence by replying simply, "Your daughter."

She wavered back and forth as she snapped, "Whatg? Have yougbotheredher?"

"She's crying!" I blundered.

"Childgren often cry ov...over trivial-things."

Her face looked queer as she smiled, perking up to speak the words she repeated every night at this hour.

"Fifteen minutes to wash-up...andg get into bedg. I don't wan...wantosee any lightg-on...afterwarge." She leaned down, planted a kiss on her daughter's forehead, turned and walked out.

My eyes watered with fury. I could barely see as the little girl slowly got up, and obediently trailed the worn path to her room. *The final line accurately implies and apt-repeated action.*

--Paige Malcolm

Paige, you have created a story that allows the reader to have empathy with the main character as well as sympathy for the little girl.

CONFESSION

I was awakened by my mother snapping up the shades on the windows and cheerfully *it is wise to* chanting, "Time to get up now. Come on. *move quickly* It's 8:30. Time to get up." I groaned and *to the immediate* rolled over, opened my eyes and squinted *realization* against the glare of the sun pouring through the windows. "Come on, get up. I'll go down *of the conflict* and make your breakfast." I lay there in the *You capture* sunshine and silence until my mind fully *your reader's* awakened to the realization that today was *interest,* Saturday, confession day.

Every Saturday, after catechism class, I had to go to confession. I hated it; I dreaded it. My stomach started doing flip-flops. I opened my secret box and dragged out the piece of paper which I had folded into halves again and again until it was only two inches square. I slowly opened it up, added up the columns, and proceeded to memorize the numbers. It was my sin list. Each night, before I went to bed, I would go over the day's activities in my mind and put a check (or checks) next to the appropriate sin. In this way, I could keep track of my wrongdoings more accurately and, therefore, avoid having to guess at or, horrors, lie to the priest in the confessional box. I memorized as I got dressed...Disobeyed Mommy and Daddy, seven times...Fought with my sister and friends, thirteen times (My sister was getting extremely difficult to live with lately)...Cheated at school, four times...Lied, ten times (My lying had been reduced tremendously when I discovered half-truths. For instance, on school mornings when my mother yelled at me, "Cindy, are you up yet?" I would sit up in bed and, therefore, could honestly say, "Yes, Mom, I'm up." Then I could snuggle back down into my pillow and blankets for another couple of minutes until she hollered again, confident that I had committed no sin.) After I figured that I had

everything down pat, I folded the list again and stuffed it into my pocket. I'd need to look at it one more time after catechism class.

I wasn't worried about catechism class; I had my question of the day memorized. I was, however, concerned about which animal I would receive on my paper. Whenever we answered the question-of-the-day correctly, we received a sticker of an adorable baby animal. I already had a squirrel and a deer and a rabbit and a chipmunk. What I wanted was a raccoon. But you never asked for what you really wanted. You took what you got and smiled and said thank you and hoped that someday, maybe, you'd get a raccoon. I got a skunk. *Nice sense of timing for the clenching line -*

Hand me a used paper -

I trudged over to the church after class and sat with the other kids waiting in the pews. I hated the wait. My stomach was *you effectively show the narrator's sense of apprehension* churning, my armpits were wet, and my fingers were freezing. I thought about my first confession when I was a seven-year-old dummy. They had started to prepare us for it weeks in advance, prompting and threatening, coaxing and deluding us. Finally, the big day arrived; my mother even came with me. I slipped into the confessional, wondered why they thought it was easier to confess your sins in the dark, and started my carefully memorized speech. Right in the middle of it, I heard the screen slide open and the faceless voice tell me that it wasn't my turn yet, that he was still hearing the other child's confession, and to please wait patiently until he came back to tell me to go ahead, please and thank you. The screen slid shut. I was so embarrassed; the only thing that saved me from running out of there, red-faced and teary-eyed, was that the only ones who really knew who the dummy was who sat in the dark alone, reciting her first confession, were the dummy and her God, and He was in no position to tell anyone down here. I waited until the priest slid open the

The memory is blended so well with the present actions,

screen and sighed, "All right, child, you may start now." "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession, and I ask forgiveness for all of my past sins, and I promise to try to sin no more in the days to come. Please forgive me and bless me, Father." "Good. By the power invested me by God, the Father, I absolve you of your sins. Now, make a good act of contrition and say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. I bless you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "Amen," I reverently spoke the word. They were right! I felt clean, good, holy, pure, lily-white. I was saved! I rushed out of the box and started skipping up to the altar, before I remembered I was in church and skipping was not allowed. I knelt down in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary. She was beautiful, radiant, so proud of me. Her smile and her eyes told me that, even though she knew I was just a dumb little kid, she still loved me so much. I grinned all the while I said my good act of contrition and my five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. And with one more glance at Mary's loving smile, I skipped all the way down the center aisle and out of the church.

I got a poke in the side from the kid next to me to get me to move over. Two more kids to go...One more...I knelt in the dark confessional and waited. I heard the murmuring on the other side of the box, but intentionally tried not to make out the words. It was a sin to listen to someone else's confession and that would be just one more sin to confess. I started humming softly to myself. The priest pushed open the screen and told me to begin. "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been one week since my last confession, and these are my sins...I am sorry for these sins and all the sins of my past life." "Good. By the power invested me by God, the Father, I absolve you of all your sins. Now, make a good act of contrition and say five Our Fathers

and five Hail Marys. I bless you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "Amen," I murmured. The screen slid shut, and it was over in less than a minute. Clean and pure, but for how long? I shuffled up to the altar and knelt under the Virgin Mary. I looked up at her. She wasn't smiling; she was frowning. I marveled at the fact that she and I were both having a rotten day. I said an act of contrition and the five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. I looked up at Mary; she was still frowning. I know how you feel, Mary. See you next Saturday. I blessed myself, stood up, and slipped out the side door.

The contrast of the narrator's feelings with those of the first "cleansing" is effective.

It was another Saturday afternoon at the church, and I was waiting in another confessional line. I had come early to sit and think about what I was going to say. I felt guilty, worried, troubled. Four days earlier, I had gone shopping for my mother. After I had picked up her things, I ended up at the cosmetic department and found the nail polishes. The tremendous variety of colors dazzled me. I loved to finger them all, imagining the bright colors on long, meticulously-shaped nails. I lined them up according to shades. I was mesmerized by all the slight variances. I picked up my favorite, Dusky Rose. God, I wanted it. I counted my mother's money, added up what her things would cost, including tax; there was only 17¢ left over. Not enough for that Dusky Rose. I thought about telling Mom that they didn't have the toothpaste or the hand cream, but I knew she really wanted them because she had sent me out on a special trip. No, I couldn't lie to my mother. Besides, she couldn't approve of Dusky Rose; she always wore Pale Natural. My mind wandered, but never had I wanted anything as badly as I wanted that nail polish. I glanced around quickly, and, in an instant, it was done. I had slipped the bottle into my pocket, paid for my mother's things, and left the store.

The repeated structure of the priest's words, the Virgin Mary's reactions, and the narrator's responses is a second organizational pattern for the story which moves back and forth in time.

There were no sirens, no lights, no one charged after me with threats of arrest and dire consequences. I had stolen something. I hurried home and locked myself in my room, staring at that bottle of Dusty Rose nail polish. The next day I threw it into the trash can at school. But my guilt feelings couldn't be disposed of as easily. And here I was, wondering what to say to the priest and what he would say to me. I would confess, tell him how very, very sorry I was, promise never again to steal anything. Would he tell me to make restitution? Would I be forgiven? Would I ever get rid of that horrible guilty and criminal feeling? It was my turn, and I sneaked into the box and waited. The screen opened, and I began. "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been four weeks since my last confession, and these are my sins." I blurted it all out, what had happened, why, how, when, how I felt afterwards, what I did with the polish. I asked for forgiveness once, twice, three times. Finally, I was empty, and it was quiet. I became aware of the hot, wine-stinking breath. It was Father Walsh, and he was drunk again. It was common knowledge that, instead of sipping the wine during Mass, he drank the whole chaliceful. And I was sure that he brought the bottle (or two) with him into the confessional. Silence. Had he passed out? Was he sleeping? Had he heard a word I said? "Mmmmmmm." Was that a moan or a snore? Or was he actually capable of thinking? "Good. By the power invested me by God, the Father, I absolve you of your sins. Now, make a good act of contrition and say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. I bless you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys? Had he heard what I said? I skipped the "amen" and trudged up to the altar and Mary. I glared at her. She was neither smiling nor frowning. Her face was a blank, and she wouldn't look at me. Five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys! Well, I'll say

The compactness of the retold sin emphasize the spelling out that ends with the line "I was empty..."

The bits of interior monologue really add to the reader's understanding of the mass character.

→ even the verbs describing her movements to the altar change with each confession as if previous ones were done!

it. "Five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys."
 There, I said it. I was still staring at
 Mary's face. So long, Mary. It's been good
 knowing you. She pretended I wasn't there. I
 turned around, strode quickly down the center
aisle looking straight ahead, and stepped out
 of the church.

*You might
 remove
 the underlined
 phrases--*

--Cecelia Smith Burnett

*Cele, you pay the reader a high
 compliment by allowing her/him
 to draw the inference that the
 "stepping out" is forever. You
 effectively replay the disillusion
 of a child for a myth.*

A Check Step in the Writing Process

At the completion of the narrative assignments, the instructor again asks students to write a paper for diagnostic purposes. The format is similar to the first diagnostic writing in that the topic choice is set by the assignment itself, and the instructor gives no directions beyond those printed at the top of the following handout, except to reassure students that they are more experienced writers due to the work they have done so far in the course.

Diagnostic Writing Assignment #2

Following are three different paper assignments. Choose one of them which interests you and write a paper discussing your ideas about the questions posed in the assignment. The quotations are placed with each topic to stimulate your thinking.

This writing assignment will be a midpoint check of your writing strengths and weaknesses.

Choice #1

I am not you
but you will not
give me a chance
will not let me be me.

'If I were you' --
but you know
I am not you,
yet you will not
let me be me.

You meddle, interfere
in my affairs
as if they were yours
and you were me.

You are unfair, unwise,
foolish to think
that I can be you,
talk, act
and think like you.

God made me me.
He made you you.
For God's sake
Let me be me.

--Roland Tombekai Dempster
"Africa's Plea"

What human realities do you think are most important to people in general? What keeps many people from striving for what can make them happy? (Do we always know what will make us happy?)

Based on the human realities you recognize, can you order the priorities of your life? What is most important to you? Least important? What does your list and its order show you about yourself and the person you would like to become?

Choice #2

I met a girl more beautiful than you
 Who's probably brighter--even more elegant,
 But she's too prosy for me, and
 Moves in pages and paragraphs,
 Speaks in chapters
 With the commas all in place,
 Predictable and shorn of wonder.

Line flows coherently from line
 With logic and reason,
 With judgment and taste,
 With index and footnotes,
 With rules and rituals,
 The mystery's edited out. . .

I met a girl more beautiful than you,
 But she could never look like someone I know
 Coming out of the rain
 In a canvas coat,
 A dingy hat,
 And in sneakers -- of all things.

--James Kavanaugh
 "She's Too Prosy for Me"

Humankind depends on the order of society to survive; we create traditions, institutions, philosophies to ensure the continuance of a system which will provide answers and protect us in spite of ourselves. Can these elements of social order bring destruction as well as salvation?

Is an ideology, a form of government, a personal belief, or an established pattern of living enough to guarantee the survival of either the individual or society?

How do we come to terms with the conflict between our need for reason and order and the human need for laughter and tears, spontaneity and creativity? What do sneakers and a rainsoaked hat have to offer when the rest of the world is sitting dry and protected in the shelter of its reasonable rules?

Choice #3

This above all, to thine own self be true.
And it must follow as night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

--William Shakespeare
Hamlet, Act I, scene iii

A man must make choices...he cannot always
do what he believes to be right.

No man stops growing; he either grows
better or worse.

Why do people choose against their own sense of right?

Do most people recognize the difference between their
daily choices and their abstract beliefs?

Is it better for the individual to be aware of this dichotomy
or oblivious to it? Is there a price to be paid for recognizing
our own hypocrisy? A price for ignoring it?

³ Bell and Shaffer, pp. 54, 77, 120.

The purpose of the assignment is threefold:

1. To determine if students will transfer narrative techniques to the expository mode without being asked to do so.
2. To determine if students have improved their abilities to write with a central focus, to meaningfully organize a paper, to utilize experience to illustrate their points, to display an authentic writing personality.
3. To give students an opportunity to be self-evaluators as they compare this diagnostic paper to the one done at the beginning of the course.

On the day the assignment is due, the instructor returns to students the first diagnostic paper and asks them to compare the second diagnostic paper to the first one, using the following questions as criteria for judging whether or not the second paper is an improvement over the first.

What likenesses/differences do you see between the two diagnostic papers?

Do you see any recurring problems?

Do you see any new problems in the second paper? If so, why do you think the new problems occurred?

Did you use any narrative techniques in the second paper?

Students are also asked what aspects of their writing they think they need to work on during the second half of the term.

Some students interpret the abstract questions on the handout as calling for "a conventional essay," which they are sure they have not been writing during the first half of the term. Because expository techniques have not yet been emphasized, they tend to have problems with focus, organization, and lack of specific examples to support statements much as they did in the first diagnostic paper. Some students experience new difficulties because they attempt to use narrative techniques but are not skilled at making a narrative/expository blend. Others write close to a pure narrative, approaching this assignment as they have those in the narrative sequence of assignments.

A few students do consciously transfer narrative techniques to the expository mode, understanding that the techniques become means/tools for clarifying expression of their ideas. The number who do so is relatively small, indicating that the transfer of techniques is not a natural one, one that automatically occurs because narrative writing has been done first in the sequence of assignments. The transfer is one that needs to be encouraged by giving students the opportunity to discover

likenesses/differences between narration and exposition and ways narrative techniques can be aids to expression in exposition.

The instructor asks students to place both diagnostic papers and their self-evaluations in the folders. When the folders are handed in for the midterm assessment, the instructor will read the second diagnostic papers and the self-evaluation, making written comments on the evaluation rather than the second diagnostic paper itself.

Chapter IV: A Blend of Techniques in Exposition

Encouraging the Transfer

A minimum of two class meetings is required to complete a series of activities that gives students the opportunity to make the discoveries mentioned above. The instructor gives the following handout to students, allowing approximately twenty minutes for its completion.

The following is a compilation of typical student responses from several composition classes.

1. What is expository writing?

Writing which explains using facts

Boring stuff

The kind of writing done in schools

Non-creative writing

It is a kind of writing in which the first paragraph contains a thesis statement and general information which will be explained in detail in the body of the paper. The paper also has a conclusion, a summary of everything already said in the paper.

These kinds of responses are typical and occur too frequently for instructors to ignore the reality that students have either been given misleading information by previous composition teachers or have, as a group, misunderstood information presented to them. Whichever is the case, the result is the same: students hold negative connotations about the means and the ends of exposition. Ken Macrorie has stated perhaps the most flippant but accurate summary of student reactions to the term expository: "It sounds like something that must be purchased in drug stores."¹

¹ Ken Macrorie, Up Taught (New York: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1970), p. 119.

2. How many other "types" of writing do you know? Define them.

Narrative writing -- writing which utilizes description, characterization, setting, and plot to show/tell a story.

Persuasive writing -- writing which tells and explains a stand, trying to convince the reader of one side or another.

Essay -- writing which draws on facts, explaining a viewpoint or an opinion.

Critique -- writing which analyzes and judges.

Diagnostic -- writing which tests.

Journalistic -- writing which includes who, what, where, when, and why; it is informative and concise.

Historical -- writing which looks at the past.

Documentary -- writing which is true.

Editorial -- writing which is an opinionated discussion of a topic.

Analytical -- scientific writing which is based on an assumption.

Definitive -- writing which defines a word or an attitude.

Classification -- writing which categorizes things.

Allegorical -- writing which uses symbols.

Comparative/Contrastive -- writing which compares and contrasts.

Poetry -- writing that rhymes.

Lyrical -- writing that is like music.

Dramatic -- writing that turns out to be a play.

The students were not short of applied labels. Instructors can hear bits and pieces of textbook and teacher-given definitions. Perhaps the most useful service instructors can perform is to convince students that no one should make cumbersome labels about what words can do.

3. What kinds of thinking processes can you name?

Evaluating	Rationalizing
Memorizing	Un-rationalizing
Daydreaming	Philosophizing
Analyzing	Shallow thinking
Synthesizing	Deep thinking
Judging	Creating
Abstracting	Concrete thinking
Denotating	Connotating
Right off the top of your head	

Students are fresh and exciting; they are thinkers, aware of the kinds of thinking they do. The blend of scientific impression and human accuracy in their comments makes for pleasurable reading, even at two o'clock in the morning.

During the second half of the period, the instructor gives students the following excerpts to read, asking them to make notes concerning the three questions at the top of the handout.

Following are four excerpts of writing. Read each one keeping in mind these questions: 1) Would you label these excerpts as different types of writing? 2) What do you think is the purpose of each excerpt? 3) Are there differences/likenesses in the effectiveness of each selection?

Excerpt #1 - Gertie moved a step nearer and stood by the desk. The woman was now taking a dark green felt hat from a shelf and did not look around when Gertie said, "I came to talk to you about my youngen -boy." Mrs. Whittle, with a crinkling hiss of paper, was removing the hat from a green paper sack. "You'll have to hurry," she said, her voice somehow matching the paper. "It's late and I've been teaching and talking to mothers all afternoon." She picked up a pair of gloves. "Well, what is the matter?" She was smoothing the drawn-on gloves finger by finger now.

"He - he don't seem to be doin' so good - not in his home room. He ain't happy; he don't like school, an I thought mebbee..." Her words, though halting and stumbling as they were, caused Mrs. Whittle to glance up from the second glove, and for the first time the two women looked at each other. Mrs. Whittle smiled, the red mouth widening below the old woman's angry glaring eyes. "And of course it's his teacher's fault your child is unhappy. Now just what do you expect me to do to make him happy?"

"That's what I came to ask you," said Gertie. "He kinda likes his other classes and back home he was..."

"Back home," Mrs. Whittle said, as if she hated the words, her voice low, hissing like a thin whip coming hard through the air, but not making much noise. "You hill-southerners who come here, don't you realize before you come that it will be a great change for your children? For the better, of course, but still a change. You bring them up here in time of war to an overcrowded part of the city and it makes for an overcrowded school. Don't you realize," she went on, looking again at Gertie, looking at her as if she alone were responsible for it all, "that until they built this wartime housing - I presume you live there - I never had more than thirty-two children in my section - and only one section." She opened her purse. "Now I have two sections - two home rooms, one in the afternoon with forty-two - many badly adjusted like your own - yet you expect me to make your child happy in spite of..." Words seemed inadequate, and she was silent while she reached into her purse.

"But I've got three more in school, and they git along and..."

"What did you say your name was?"

"Nevels. My boy's name is Reuben. Maybe you don't recollect him, but..."

"I don't what?" And she frowned as she might have at a child giving the wrong answer.

"Recollect, I said," Gertie answered.

"Does that mean 'remember'?"

Excerpt #2 - Concern was expressed about the quality and quantity of education available to children in the 1960's. Great migrations from the areas of poorer economical opportunities to the centers of industrial activity and wealth decreased the likelihood that a child educated in a given community would spend the productive years of his life there. Economically, the problem was attacked in many states by shifting more of the cost of education to revenues drawn from the centers of industrial wealth. The possibility of expanding this policy through a national system of school financial support was anxiously discussed. Socially, the problem was attacked in many ways, including attempts to enlarge educational opportunity for Negroes.

Excerpt #3 - The crisis of our time, as we are beginning slowly and painfully to perceive, is a crisis not of the heads but of the hearts. It is a crisis of hunger but not a crisis created by any doubt as to our ability to feed ourselves. It is a crisis of cold but not a crisis of cold created by any doubt as to our ability to put roofs over our heads or clothes on our backs. The failure is a failure of desire.

It is because we the people do not wish - it is because we the people do not know what it is that we should wish, because we the people do not know what kind of world we should imagine, that this trouble haunts us.

The failure is a failure of the spirit: a failure of the spirit to imagine, a failure of the spirit to imagine and desire.

Excerpt #4 - The availability of guns has a curious and macabre relation to violence. This form of technology not only vastly increases the range and effectiveness of violence but also has a strong effect - generally dulling - on the consciousness of those who use them. One day when I was on a farm in a fairly remote section of New Hampshire, I noticed under an apple tree a stray dog which seemed to be diseased. Having been alone for some time, during which time one's imagination often comes up with weird ideas, I decided the dog had rabies. Although I couldn't get to it in the tangle of branches, our own dog, to which our whole family was deeply attached, could and did. She went sniffing around the "rabid" one, and, being a chow, she would not come back to me no matter how much I called. I went in the house and got the Lugar pistol that my son used to shoot the targets for practice, inserted a clip in it, and came out to shoot the rabid dog. Now the point of this story is that my having in my hand a pistol with which to shoot some living thing changed me into an entirely different person psychologically. I could deal out death to anyone since I was possessed by this instrument of death; I had become an irrational man of hostility. The gun had me rather than my having it: I had become its instrument.

Your task as members of a small group is to discuss, exchange ideas, agree/disagree, and come up with a written response to the following question: One of the excerpts is an example of the "type" of writing we have been doing. Can you see any transfer of techniques to other "types" of writing and thinking? (The excerpts should give you a referent for your discussion and your answer.)

At the next class meeting, students meet in groups to carry out the task given at the end of the handout. Approximately thirty minutes should be allowed for the small group discussions. The instructor directs students to appoint a recorder for each group so that there will be a set of notes from their discussions to share in large group during the last half of the period.

These are notes compiled by one group of students as they engaged in this discussion.

Excerpt #1: This is narrative writing, the kind we have been doing so far in the course. The piece of writing is a story told through characters' viewpoints. The excerpt invites the reader to relate through her/his emotions.

Excerpt #2: This is the other end of the spectrum, pure exposition. The writing presents facts with no concrete descriptions. It reads like a report, a factual account of a social situation. The excerpt makes the reader a passive recipient of a generalization.

Excerpt #3: This is opinionated, beautiful prose, almost poetic in its languaging. The words are repetitious, but the repetition seems conscious and purposeful. The excerpt utilizes abstractions, challenging the reader to understand the symbolic meaning of hunger.

Excerpt #4: This is a combination of exposition and narration, dealing with both the intangible and the tangible. The narration is used as evidence to prove a point. (We resent the writer having to tell us, "Now the point of the story is...") The excerpt is the

ultimate explanation of a psychological act; the author presents an idea and also calls for an emotional response from the reader by the creation of a picture. We learn some things about the potential for violence in people; the author reveals that he is capable of the same reactions he generalizes for others.

Overall conclusions: Narrative techniques can be used in an expository framework to make the writing more interesting and to depict situations to which the reader can relate. We are still not sure what expository writing is, but we hope excerpt 2 isn't all it can be or all we are going to do with it. We think there are many writing techniques that can be used, and a writer chooses different ones for different purposes.

At the conclusion of the small group discussions, the instructor reveals the sources of the four excerpts: 1. The Dollmaker by Harriet Arnow. 2. The American Peoples Encyclopedia Yearbook. 3. A speech by Archibald MacLeish. 4. Power and Innocence by Rollo May. Giving credit on the handout itself would give away too much information, guiding student discoveries rather than letting them happen through the exchange of ideas.

All discussion groups are not as insightful as this one was, but all have some significant ideas that can aid the instructor in summarizing the following points:

1. The key difference between narration and exposition is that the former is time-bound while the latter is not.
2. The significant point is not the differences in the two "types" of writing, but the different purposes for which various writing techniques are used.
3. A piece of narration places a greater responsibility upon the reader for drawing inferences. A piece of exposition places a greater responsibility upon the writer for making connections for the reader. If a writer finds her/himself using exposition to merely state what has already been shown in a descriptive example, s/he realizes that one must question more thoroughly the reasons for using the example in order to give the reader a new way of seeing.
4. Rather than categorizing written discourse under the labels of narration and exposition, student writers should concern themselves with these five key questions:
 - A. What do I have to say?
 - B. Why am I saying it?
 - C. To whom am I speaking?
 - D. Under what circumstances am I speaking?
 - E. Of all the writing techniques I know, which ones will be most effective to use considering my answers to the preceding four questions?

If the writing done in schools seems artificial, it is because the reasons for writing are frequently extrinsic rather than intrinsic; there is no real audience, and the constraints are specialized and frequently unrealistic. Being aware of a purpose for writing is a part of authenticity; an instructor can help to raise a student's awareness that the why behind writing grows naturally out of an owned message. The audience for a piece of written discourse can be consciously chosen; it can range from self to universal. Once the audience is chosen, a notion of the intended audience can guide the writer in the choices of material, voice, and approach. Students should become wise choosers of when to use what writing techniques, freeing themselves from dependency upon dominant teacher directions.

Developing a Sense of Voice

The concept of role playing is not a new one; it has long been discussed as an integral part of human beings interacting with one another. The hiding of the self behind a mask is a familiar practice to students who remember their Halloween costumes or their donning of another personality in a play. The formalized model for a persona in speaking and in writing

is as old as Aristotle's discussion of ethos and Cicero's discussion of style, and as new as the definitive treatment of the personality conveyed in writing given by Walker Gibson in Persona: A Style Study for Readers and Writers. The purpose here is not to retread familiar ground by reiterating all that has been said concerning the various ways a communicator can present her/his persona to an audience, but rather to explore how a student writer discovers the authentic voices of her/himself and effectively uses them in written discourse.

The two words "effective" and "authentic" trigger a discussion of poor practices that have been suggested to students. Students are often advised to present an argument by exclusively treating the pro or the con without introducing anything from the opposition lest they weaken their case. Participation in extracurricular debate forces students to be prepared to argue one side of a proposition or the other, regardless of their personal values and beliefs concerning the proposition. So-called research papers are assigned with more emphasis given to the outside sources to be used than to a student's own forming of a hypothesis and her/his testing of that hypothesis. Teachers strongly encourage students to launder their papers of the first person pronoun, suggesting to them that the fuzzy adolescent mind is not capable of making and evidencing sound personal

assertions. It is not surprising that students come to overlook the importance of honesty in their writing; their attention has been focused on "whatever works."

It may be argued that establishing a strong case for only one side of an argument teaches selectivity, that being prepared to argue either for or against a proposition sharpens the use of logic, that reporting on others' views of a topic increases skills in using the library, and that deleting the first person encourages students to be more formal and broad in perception and perspective; the point, however, is that students are not being given the opportunity to discover that the most effective piece of writing is the honest one in which the ethos, the character of the speaker, shines through. Aristotle's triad of ethos, logos, and pathos called for an interrelationship of the presentation of the character of the speaker, a reinforcement of the thoughts presented with sound logic, and an awareness of the audience to whom the discourse was presented.

The five key questions for a writer to ask her/himself (1. What do I have to say? 2. Why am I saying it? 3. To whom am I speaking? 4. Under what circumstances am I speaking? 5. Of all the writing techniques I know, which ones will be most effective to use considering my answers to the preceding four questions?) also encourage interrelationship of the parts to

the whole and give equal weight to effectiveness and authenticity. Wayne C. Booth speaks of this interrelationship as the rhetorical stance, "a stance which depends on discovering the elements that are at work in any communicative effort."² Booth suggests that this balance should be the major goal of teachers of rhetoric, for though students may never come to the point of finding the balance easily, they will know that it is what makes the difference between effective communication and mere wasted effort.

The curricular problem in regard to a discussion of voice, the personality of writing, is not solely one of philosophy but one of introducing the concept of voice to students. The instructor poses the following discussion questions to students as an activator for the first expository assignment:

1. What makes another person identifiable to you?
What lets you say, "That's Joyce Shaffer."?

(The instructor can use her/himself or a student for the example. After students give their responses and the instructor lists them on the board, the instructor asks them to categorize the various traits into psychological and physical.)
2. Can you identify a personality by her/his writing?

(The instructor can introduce three pieces of her/his own writing or three excerpts from any author. Here included are three excerpts written by the designer of this curriculum.)

² Booth, p. 74.

An autobiography usually begins with the who, what, where, and when of birth, but these facts must be supplied by memorized retelling of another's account. Since the word "autobiography" implies knowledge of self by self, my account begins the first day I realized there was a me.

In one corner of the oblong living room sits a two-eyed, upright radio blaring the opening strains of the "William Tell Overture" preceding "The Lone Ranger." My daddy pulls his tie to one side and unbuttons his shirt as he sinks into the overstuffed chair and begins to listen. He motions me to come and sit on his lap. I snuggle up against his chest. His heartbeat resounds against my ear, rhythmically filling my whole body. His deep breathing raises and lowers me upon his lap. The dialogue from the radio fades into the corners of the room; the sounds of my daddy's life dominate. In between his beats and his breaths echo my beats and my breaths, smaller and softer, but separate.

Autobiographical writing assumes a voice of authority concerned with outer events, even though those events which took place in infancy must be learned from others. However, the term "autobiography" also connotes a stream of consciousness making a never-ending comment on the past, present, and future of a person. Thus, this recording shall be a self-omniscient tale opening with a discovery of existence.

There sat in the corner of the parlour an upright radio which was emitting the music of the "William Tell Overture" that preceded "The Lone Ranger." My father adjusted his tie and shirt in order to lessen the constriction and proceeded to lower himself unto the settee to be entertained by the radio offering. He indicated that I should sit on his lap; I did so. The coronary activity within his chest cavity was heard by me. His respirations had the effect of changing my position upon his lap. The auditory waves from the radio dissipated; the auditory vital signs of my father dominated. In conjunction with his coronary and respiratory activities, there could be heard my coronary and respiratory activities. They were diminutive but distinct.

What the hell is an autobiography? Oh yeah! I remember some creepy junior high teacher with those phony glasses hanging on a string tellin' us that it should include all that crap about who you are, what you're gonna be, where ya' lived, and

when you got born. Well, if I'm gonna tell this story, I'm gonna start with the parts I know for sure, like the time I knew I really was a kickin' for-real person.

We had this big radio that was always sittin' in the livin' room. One night we was gonna take in "The Lone Ranger." My old man whipped off his tie and sat in this big ugly chair to listen to the program. He says I can sit on his knee if I want to. Well, I did, and man! It was really freaky...I mean I could hear his heart a thumpin' away, like to damn near filled me up. Then he starts this big breathin' and me hoppin' up and down each time he sucks it in and lets it out. I couldn't hear the Lone Ranger or his sidekick for all that thumpin' and breathin' goin' on. And you know, it's strange, but right alon' with his thumpin' and breathin' is my thumpin' and breathin', not as big and loud, you understand, but damn, it was mine!

Joyce Cary once said, "A style assumed as a style lies over everything like brown gravy. It is a form that cannot possibly cohere in the writer's content: it is a set of tricks."³ Cary's quote is a cogent summary of the kinds of discoveries made by students hearing the three instructor-written excerpts. They commented that the first excerpt signals that the writer is aware of an audience, a large one perhaps, even though the audience isn't addressed directly. They suggested that the description of the second paragraph contrasts sharply with the formal opening, but the contrast generates surprise and struck them as a strength in keeping reader interest. They found diction to be the main factor in the formal tone of the second

³ Joyce Cary, Art and Reality: Ways of the Creative Process (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1958), p. 96.

excerpt. They thought the diction was so exaggerated that the passage acted as a parody. The enthusiasm of the third excerpt amused them, but they said they were hearing the imitated voice of Holden Caulfield, a little less graphic than the original.

Obviously, the examples were contrived in that only one seems to be written by an author using an authentic voice. The examples could be just as useful in terms of class discussion if they were three excerpts by the same author displaying three different but authentic stylistic choices. Any individual speaks in many voices. No matter how sincere or how authentic an individual is, not every element of that authenticity nor every trait of a complex personality can appear in response to a single situation. From a range of attributes that constitutes the total personality, the writer presents a self relevant to a context.

3. The more important question is, what clues lead to identification?

(After students list the elements of recognition, the instructor helps them to categorize the elements into what the author says (ideas/content), and how the author says it (tone/choices of writing techniques).

The writer's selection of diction, syntax, writing techniques, and organizational patterns contributes to the reader's aesthetic appreciation of the writer's prose personality.

4. If you fail to identify the writer, why do you fail? What's missing?

(The instructor can read a typical college catalogue description written as though no person is behind the words. S/he can remind students of the phony "brown gravy" style of two of the instructor-written excerpts, but also point out that in many pieces of writing students have done for the narrative assignments, purposeful distance was created between the real writer and the audience so that characters could display themselves.)

At the completion of the activator, students should realize that the voice fulfills the requirements of perspicuity and ornament described by Hugh Blair.

All the qualities of good style may be ranged under two heads, perspicuity an ornament. For all that can possibly be required of language is to convey our ideas clearly to the minds of others and, at the same time, in such a dress, as by pleasing and interesting them, shall most effectively strengthen the impressions which we seek to make.

⁴ Hugh Blair, "Lecture 10" of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, as quoted in Richard A. Lanham, Style, an Anti-textbook (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), p. 40.

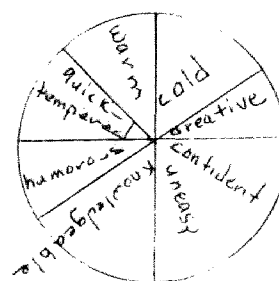
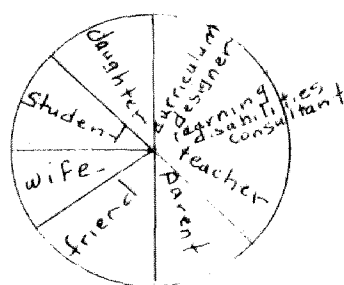
What's Bugging You?

The first expository assignment is a personalized one in which the instructor asks students to consider what's bugging them, "bugging" in the sense that whatever is discussed could be so pleasing that not much else is thought about or so annoying and/or hurtful that the same dominating emphasis in their lives occurs. (It may seem like an odd usage of the word "bugging" to suggest something pleasing. Many students, however, talk of a pleasing aspect of their lives becoming a distraction.) They might consider the source of the pleasure or the irritation, in what ways it affects them, what it means to them, what it teaches them about themselves. They might look back at their list of universal questions generated before the major narrative assignment to once again consider what's worth writing about. They should ask themselves the five key questions before and during the writing. One constraint is placed upon the assignment; the students are to use narrative techniques within the paper, making them subordinate to the idea being discussed. Students may not write a narrative such as they did in the first half of the course. They are to consider their ideas/content, their variations of tone/selections of words and levels of formality, and their choice of writing techniques.

The instructor may wish to use some student papers done for this assignment for the purpose of a large group evaluative session in which class members assess the effectiveness of the writers' rhetorical stances. The three representative papers included at the end of this section can be used for this purpose.

On the day the assignment is due, the instructor initiates a discussion by asking students to make a role wheel for themselves, including actual roles they play and/or personality traits they possess. These are two sample wheels made by the designer of this curriculum.

Figure 2: Role and Personality Wheels



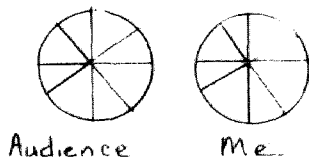
Students should ask themselves these questions:

1. What determines the part of me that speaks at any given time?

(Students can be encouraged to think again about the five key questions in order to consider the central idea being communicated, the purpose for communicating, the audience, and the situation.)

2. What must I recognize about my audience?

(Too often a writer fails to consider that the members of the audience are as complex in the roles they play and the traits they possess as is the writer. This recognition discourages decisions based on stereotypes as to what part of a writer speaks. e.g. students quickly respond that someone writing a curriculum design should automatically speak from that role to an audience of teachers, then they reconsider to say maybe the writer could utilize the role of teacher... well, parent, too, and perhaps student...and maybe the important thing to consider is that there is an authentic person who permeates all roles.)



3. How do I maintain authenticity in the presence of a controlling audience? What is manipulation?

(Students speak of political figures who have omitted certain statements for one audience or another in order to gain favor or blatantly altered statements for a controlling audience. They speak of aspects of advertising in which the substance of what is said is aimed at what will sell. It becomes the instructor's task to show students that good writers do to some degree accomodate their messages for their audiences and to explain the differences between justified accomodation and unjustified dishonesty.)

The instructor asks students to write on the top of their papers their roles as writers, their central ideas, their purposes, and their assumed audiences. Students are then given the following handout and asked to pair themselves to assess their papers in terms of voice.

Small Group Assessment of Voice: Expository Assignment #1
Handout

Writing is human behavior...like talking...talking to say whatever you feel strongly about, whatever you spend a lot of time thinking about, whatever you think is worth saying.

There was no assigned subject for this writing; you were asked only to talk on paper about what you are thinking and how you are feeling, saying as honestly as you can, what is going on inside your head.

You are full of special knowledge, vivid experience, and honest feelings. Whatever your style of talking, whatever the range of your vocabulary, you were to be completely free to say what you think and feel.

Assignment for today: Meet with your assigned partner, share your papers aloud and assess them according to the following questions.

- Do your words express the personality you want to project, the you you want others to hear?
- Have you put words together so that you hear yourself talking as you read what you have written? Would you ever say those sentences?
- What tone of voice would you use in a conversation to help you convey the meaning, the feeling you want to convey in each piece you have written? Do your written words convey that tone?
- Now share with one another what you think the central idea of the paper is and the purpose you have in writing it. Do these two things significantly influence the "voice" you used?
- Who is your assumed audience? Did the recognition of audience affect your choice of voice?⁵

Assignment for next class meeting: Take your paper with you and before next class meeting assess it according to

⁵ Discussion directions adapted from Lou Kelley's From Dialogue to Discourse (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1972), p. 147.

writing voice. Make changes in your paper if you don't recognize your voice in what you say. When you hand in your paper, make sure you have jotted down at the top of the first page the central idea of the paper, the purpose, the intended audience and the role from which you are speaking.

Three Representative Papers: What's Bugging You?

WHY?

Joey sat quietly as the dull evening rays drained from the small, bare room. Dried tears lay on his thin face, the path of the waterless rivers leading to his glassy blue eyes. His fragile fingers, cracked and bloody, reached up to the thatch of tossed blond curls. He felt around, and discovered several missing clumps. His nose had stopped bleeding now, but the dry flow formed a maroon line down his face. Joey's Winnie-the-Pooh shirt was ripped, hanging loosely on his young, weak frame. His bruised skin clung to his protruding ribs; many rough, red marks began their familiar stage of welting. The door to the room creaked open, and the towering frame of Joey's father entered, clutching The Belt.

Pat, the opening narrative description most definitely catches the reader's attention, setting up a suspense to read on to see how you are going to comment on this specific case. You might consider the advisability of using so many dramatic adjectives. Isn't the stark image of pain enough to illustrate your point without pushing it?

Nice sense of transition -

Thousands of children each year fall victims of child abuse. Some live to be rescued by foster homes, bearing the scars encrusted in them forever. Others, however, are not so fortunate. The ominous question is, "why?" Families (with child abuse) are usually families with much trouble and little love. Food stamps and unemployment checks aren't enough to keep a family happy. Tension builds, and a comfortable release is a helpless child's body. In other cases, parents equate child abuse with child punishment. Such as the case of a four-year-old boy who died from child abuse in January, 1975. The boy refused to drink his water, so his mother's boyfriend placed him on a sizzling radiator for five minutes, to "teach him a lesson." In yet more lower income homes? Even though you give the examples of equating child abuse with punishment and as a result of drinking or drug-taking, you do not counter the earlier impression that child abuse is a parental reaction of those who are unemployed.

Is it being "fortunate" to have scars encrusted forever?

Pat, do you mean to imply that child abuse happens only in

It is not clear what you are questioning. It appears that you are saying "but" children who are not abused by foster homes? What you mean to say, "why" does child abuse happen?"

situations, child abuse is a result of parental drinking or drug-taking. A drunk or high parent stumbles into his home, finds his wallet empty, and lashes his anger onto his child.

is out in anger at his child,

Nowhere in your earlier discussion did you point out that abusive parents had conceived their children "not for fun or not for hope for a miracle."

The most important question to me seems to be "how?" Not how child abuse happens, but how we can stop it. The ultimate solution is to bear our children due to want--not out of fun or out of hope for a miracle--due to love.

Your solution is on a dualistic level--"due to love." You make the "how" too simplistic. What are some practical means that you might suggest for the release of tensions, for adequate and appropriate discipline (children) for TIME digging deeply enough to examine the causes rather than the symptoms problem?

I, we, us, everyone else... what is your consistent present of action?

I have so much to do. There is so very very much to learn and to experience. But time seems to be against us all. Nothing has changed. We all go through this never-ending cycle of birth, to growth, to maturity, to death. But why should I act like everyone else? I never have; why start now? I have drive. I have determination. I have ambition. I'm not going to allow myself to be entrapped by these cybernetic-like people. As in the past, I will be my own person and work at my own pace and at what I enjoy doing.

I grew up as any other child would have under similar circumstances. I played Little League baseball. I was a Boy Scout. I went to a Catholic grade school. At that time, or even now, I wasn't popular and I thank all those people who so graciously rejected me from their clubs and cliques. Those years proved to be the beginning of my character. What I am today, is only a refined older version of myself twenty years ago. Through those lonely years, I have grown to be independent, intelligent, and self-sufficient. I am a person who has amassed millions through his individuality, which has set me apart from all the other mediocre businessmen in my field.

you justify yourself is mediocre through the structure of this sentence. You don't mean to say that overtly, do you?

The casual inserted references to twenty years ago ... amassed millions ... leads to the "You now have ..." line, tremendously increasing reader curiosity.

"You now have forty years."

Some of my most lasting memories have ~~no~~ *been* been from that high school of five-thousand students. The LaCrosse team. Elizabeth Grant. Judy O'Brien. Mr. Elliott's history class. "Toma" Peterson. Jimmy McIlwee. Mr. Bell's advisory. Many relationships were formed in those years that I thought, or at least wished, would last forever. The people, the places, good and bad times, friends and enemies. Indeed, all good and sincere memories, but all too few and far apart.

"You now have thirty-seven years."

And, this is really an insightful view of the wasted life.

College. The climax of a student's preceding seventeen years. Supposedly, the foremost in social environments. I've always known that I was ahead of my time as far as social and mental capabilities are concerned, and as a result of being this far advanced, I have been isolated in my own world of achievement, over-achievement. The key words here are constant work. But there was a redeeming value to those years away from home. Once again, as in high school, relationships with women were my saving grace. I valued sincere and meaningful relationships with women. Lisa Hepner. Kelley Quinn. Ellen Sullivan. They all made those years quite worthwhile. If I could have done it over again, I would have spent more time with them and tried to devote a fraction more with them than my work. I now formally apologize to them for all the cancelled dates and interrupted nights when I suddenly ran off to the office or the lab. As in high school, I retain sweet memories of the sheep-skin and fleeting moments of glory.

"You now have thirty-three years."

Here I am. I'm in a position that I knew I would hold twenty years ago. I have my Manhattan and Los Angeles condominiums. I have my sports cars. I have, as expected, my

This section doesn't really connect to the rest of the material presented in the paragraph.

relationships with another dozen women. And most of all, more important than all of the others, I have my work. But I still haven't accumulated the Eastern C & B Corporation or the Midwest National Trust companies or the one-hundred-million-dollar grant for agricultural research and sea farming and... *you imply that ambition is the master passion.*

"You now have twenty-eight years."

You know what I have been doing? I've been misled. Lost. No one ever cared to direct me. No. I'm doing fine in the business world. I'm financially secure. No one ever showed me how to live life and enjoy it. We are not on this Earth to live out a cycle of existence; we are here to give and take with people, with the environment. Now I know what I want to...

*Alas!
Awareness
comes too
late.*

"You have been terminated."

No! Emphatically no! Absolutely not! I haven't lived yet. They told me slow down and live. How did I know? I want to dive the Great Barrier Reef. I want to ski the Italian Alps. I want to live to a ripe old age and look back and appreciate the joys, the sorrows, the good, the bad and every single moment of my life.

"We're sorry."

Setting off the spoken aloud lines with quotation marks helps the reader to distinguish between dialogue and interior monologue.

"Nurse, would you get Dr. Burnes on Com-line 6 and have him call the coroner?"

Hey, don't pull that sheet over my head. I can't see... It's so terribly dark. I'm still alive... I want to live. It's just that I've been so busy with my work. It takes up so much of my time. My feet and hands are uncomfortably chilly. May I have another blanket?

Andy, one of the
most exciting
things about
working and
learning

"What do we have here?"

" #555."

with you

"I see..."

'Dreams and Breakthroughs

Ambition, Drive and Determination..

is having the
opportunity to see the
experimental risks
you take as you try
different techniques
and structures for
communicating

Cause: Qualudes and Red Wine.

Termination Date: 9-10-68

Time: 1:30 a.m.'

meaning. The one
person is harder to
is a subtle

"We'll send this one to Ward 3, Room 14."

means expressing the lifestyle you deplore. How many
times I have told you --Andy Wroblewski
that you are interesting?

DOING WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US

This is a good way of placating the members of
the audience who might automatically

The repetition of
the simple
statement
is a concise
and effective
way of opening
the paper
with
strong
assertions.

I am not a radical feminist; I am not "turn off" the
bitter and aggressive. I am a woman becoming
aware of her potential; I am cynical and
assertive. I know what is expected of me, but
I am refusing the offer. *feminist
crusader.*

I was born and raised in a very traditional
family. My father was a blue-collar worker
who earned all the money that came into the
house. He did what was expected of him. When
he got home each day after performing his
duty, he would grab a beer, push back into his
easy chair, and rest until supper was ready.
After supper, he would sit in his chair, drink
beer, alternately watch TV and catnap, and,
finally go to bed promptly at 10:00. My mother
also knew what was expected of her. She ran
the house. Specifically, she did the house
cleaning, the cooking, the grocery shopping,
the laundry; she raised three kids and spent
the money my father brought into the house;
she handled the countless and repetitious
number of minor catastrophes which arose
daily. I learned early that the roles were
absolute; my father never cooked a meal, and

my mother never earned any money for the jobs she performed. In short, my father was the breadwinner; my mother was the housewife.

They did what was expected of them. *Drawing upon your personal experiences gives you credibility as a speaker.*

And though I understood and I am sympathetic to the fact that it had been determined by the master, Tradition, so long ago that both my mother and father were to do what was expected of them, it is the women of my mother's generation whom I pity; they had no real choices. They either didn't get married, worked for the same company as a secretary for 45 years, and died frustrated and alone, or else they did get married, had kids, worked for the same company for 55 years, and died frustrated and surrounded by family. They did what was expected of them, and in silence, wondered if there were more. *You clearly state what cause you are championing.*

For the first 22 years of my life, I bought it, all of it, all the promises of marital bliss and happy-ever-after. I got married, delivered and started to raise a son, cleaned the house twice a week, and did what was expected of me. For awhile, I was honestly satisfied and happy and content. But slowly, ever so slowly, the frustration, the boredom, the triviality of it all started me to wonder. When I got to the point that I could do all my weekly chores in one day, I wondered what to do with the other six days. When I found a blouse on sale for \$4.95 and couldn't buy it without asking permission of my husband, I wondered if I felt guilty about spending "our" money because, deep down inside, I knew it was "his" money. When I tried to enter a discussion with some men at a party, and they merely looked upon my comments as an interruption, ignored me, and continued on with their conversation, I wondered if I was as stupid as I felt, and they believed, I was. When men made ridiculing, demeaning, and condescending remarks about me, I believed them, and subsequently, I made ridiculing, demeaning, and condescending remarks about myself. I did *It is not yet clear what the assessment audience is.*

what was expected of me, and out loud, demanded that there be more. *Your personal experience indicates that there has been a change cycle for you.*

Too often, when women do what is expected of them, it means being wives and mothers and homemakers and secretaries and nurses and teachers and not much else. There are too few women who have broken out of the traditional roles passed down through the generations, too few female models for younger women to imitate and emulate, and for everyone, women and men, to recognize and appreciate. It is a vicious circle. A mother tells her daughter not to accept the tradition, that she can do anything she wants, but the daughter sees around her only housewives and nurses and secretaries. The daughter cannot be blamed for being afraid or not believing that she can escape the stereotypes to be the one who becomes the model for other women. It is easier to be a follower, the one who plays by the rules, than it is to be a leader, the one who makes the rules. We need a few good women to be leaders.

Your careful analysis is a means of showing the reader that this is a considered position. You are taking.

We also need to open the doors of universities, of businesses, of government, but most of all, of people's minds. People must learn to see, to accept, to believe, to understand that women can be, and have a right to be, anything they choose. There can be no more stereotypical cubbyholes labeled "women's work" and "men's work." While some women may aspire to be the new breed of female lawyers, senators, and corporation vice-presidents, there will always be women who choose the traditional roles of wives and mothers and homemakers. No matter what the choice, no one has the right to make ridiculing, demeaning and condescending remarks about the choice. We must educate young and old, women and men, everyone, that we all have the right, the duty, to be the best at whatever it is we choose to do, without fear, or ridicule, or guilt. No longer must we do what is expected of us.

The change to find person plural is a subtle way of inviting the reader to join with you in making a change.

The change to third person indicates that you and the reader are not included in this class. Do you want this to happen here?

Cele, the purposeful use of repetition, almost as a refrain, gives a pleasing poetic quality to your writing. The what and the why of the paper are clear. The intended audience is fuzzy. you write with an authentic voice in a spirited manner. I have no doubts that a live person is speaking.

by To whom does the "we" refer? The tone indicates women alone, but the previous usage indicates you and the reader.

Evaluation: Major Areas of Growth

When students have completed the first expository assignment, they should be ready to assess the course and their involvement in it to this point. The placement of the evaluation is a considered one, for students will have experienced the cumulative build of the narrative assignments, the self-judging of the second diagnostic papers, as well as the opportunity to transfer narrative techniques to the expository mode. They will have received several papers with teacher comments, have participated in many large group discussions and small group evaluation sessions. Students are given the following evaluation handout and asked to respond as participating learners.

Name: _____
 (You do not have to sign
 your name if you choose not
 to.)

EVALUATION

MAJOR AREAS OF GROWTH

Cognitive-----Social-----Human

Activities through
which growth may be
measured

Evaluation of others' writing
 Participation in group discussions
 Original papers

If you are a growing learner, growth should be apparent in the above three areas. There should be cognitive growth in writing skills and evidence of a growing, responsive understanding of the human condition. If the purpose of peer evaluation and group discussion has been greater than merely sharing information, there should be signs of growth in social awareness.

Would you please respond to the following questions as freely and as specifically as you can as an assessment of this class and of your personal involvement in it?

1. How do you feel about the human contact in this class?
Are we a helpful community of learners?

2. Do you feel confident about evaluating the writing of others? Do you appreciate others' evaluations of your writing?

3. Are you growing in your ability to use writing skills?

4. Was it a worthwhile experience to do narrative writing first? Have any of the narrative techniques been helpful to you in expository writing?
5. Have you learned to be a better thinker, a more sensitive feeler?

Any additional comments:

Following is a compilation of responses from representative composition classes.

1. How do you feel about the human contact in this class?
Are we a helpful community of learners?

The class is bound with trust and respect.

I think we've had very good exchanges of ideas; I have walked away several times asking myself seriously inside the same questions we discussed in class. My classmates are real mind expanders, stimulating new ideas in me.

This is the only class where I am an individual and not just a number.

Learning everyone's name at the first was a surface indication of the kind of atmosphere we were going to build. We know one another; we learn and grow together.

I think that by meeting in small groups, I can learn more by trying to help other people. It seems like teaching helps me to understand more fully.

I think the group work in this class is very beneficial. It helps us not only with problems with our papers, but we can also learn to express ourselves out loud to others, to meet others, to get along with others.

The class responds to one another on a human level. In English this is the way it should be because English deals with humanness.

2. Do you feel confident about evaluating the writing of others? Do you appreciate others' evaluations of your writing?

I feel a lot more confident now than I did at first about evaluating. I've learned to recognize specific standards to measure writing against, and judging from the way others have gone about evaluating my writing, the rest of the class has done the same.

I feel confident in evaluating others' writing. I find myself even analyzing books I read for pleasure. It's interesting.

In accepting the suggestions of others, I was a bit selective based on whom I thought was really an interested and involved learner.

I feel the same way about good writing that Justice Douglas does about pornography, "I know it when I see it." This course has allowed me to establish a set of criteria for judging writing.

I learn more from others' evaluations of my writing. I don't feel confident evaluating others as I feel they are better writers than I am.

I am a firm believer in peer evaluation because it gives me more than the teacher's opinion.

I hedge about making really negative comments about someone's paper.

3. Are you growing in your ability to use writing skills?

Yes, I've begun to find it easier to express and organize my thoughts. The idea of combining narrative and expository techniques has helped a lot in my growth.

I never really thought I was much of a writer, but this class has helped me to write what I feel and what I think. Before, I always thought to write was to write the way I was taught in high school -- with no personality.

Growing? Come on now! I had a block against writing; I couldn't write. Now I have the confidence to try my ideas and revise, revise, revise.

I feel I am growing in my writing abilities as seen in the differences between the two diagnostic papers.

I tried some new things and grew in the level of knowing what worked or didn't work for me.

4. Was it a worthwhile experience to do narrative writing first? Have any of the narrative techniques been helpful to you in expository writing?

My experimentation with the combination of narrative and expository techniques produced more interesting writing.

Narrative writing gave me a chance to tie to the familiar and then place the familiar in an imaginative context.

I learned that description and dialogue can be used in expository writing to vivify examples.

Starting with narrative writing broke down the barriers to composing and built confidence. By seeing the relationship between the two forms, I have learned that expository writing can be more than footnoted B.S.; it, too, can be personally worthwhile writing.

The basic idea of "Show, don't tell" applied to narrative writing can carry over to expository writing in the form of descriptive examples to clarify points. Although I "tell" more in expository writing, I find that using narrative techniques demonstrates more faith in the reader by believing s/he can draw out my conclusions (if I show her/him), and I don't have to hit the reader over the head with my ideas.

Aren't tags for writing ridiculous? I have an idea I want to communicate, and I use all the techniques available to me to do so. Remember me? I'm the one who gave two footnotes in my short story...sigh.

5. Have you learned to be a better thinker, a more sensitive feeler?

The atmosphere of the class has helped me be less reserved than I normally am; I feel free to express my ideas. The input from others in the class has helped stimulate my thinking.

I feel more aware of things happening around me. I also find myself thinking more in depth than before. Also, for some reason, I feel more objective in different situations.

I'm much more aware of the influences in my life. Even the minute things are more apparent as I have to concentrate on them to make my life whole. I'm beginning to realize more about how I think, in ways I've never discovered before.

This is pretty heavy stuff!

I have never needed to be more sensitive, but I earnestly want to be a better thinker and believe this class as helped.

Working on these papers makes me realize what can be done through writing. Errors make it a bit frustrating, but encouragement helps me to do a better job and to improve.

Because most composition classes are taught in academic arenas that by tradition call for teacher grading of student performance, it is necessary to discuss the elements judged to make grading decisions. It would be misleading to equate evaluating with grades. Evaluating is a process that includes many kinds of thinking, one of which is intuition; grades are indicators of both student and teacher performance, indicators which can never be totally accurate. It would be equally misleading to say that grading is the only evaluative procedure for the instructor. S/he has been involved in large group discussion, having opportunities to assess student participation; been both participant and observer in small group evaluative sessions, again having opportunities to assess student participation; read the students' written evaluations of the major narratives and their self-evaluations of the diagnostic papers;

read all the student papers and responded to them with written comments; seen each student's cumulative folder including all original drafts and revisions.

All of these evaluative activities do not yield a fool-proof set of percentages or a comparative grading scale, irrelevant anyway since this curriculum design discourages either measurement or evaluation in the normative mode. Of course, the instructor is guided in part by intuition, "the basis for any teaching finally being subjective and founded upon [her/his] own estimate of results."⁶

The presence of intuition and subjectivity in the evaluative process does not negate the importance of a set of criteria the instructor uses for making a judgment of the cognitive, social, and human growth of a student. In order to measure growth in the cognitive area, the instructor must be continually aware of the thinking processes the student is using, the writing techniques s/he is experimenting with in the cumulative build of assignments, the accuracy of writing in terms of grammar and mechanics, the attention being paid to revision, and the abilities to evidence evaluative judgments of peers' papers.

Growth in social awareness is determined by the instructor observing the student's participation in small groups. Does

⁶ Winterowd, p. 16.

s/he ask questions of other students? Is s/he sensitive to personality factors, attempting to draw out shy members and discourage overly aggressive domination by one student? Is s/he willing to share ideas with others? Does s/he practice good verbal skills? Is s/he willing to listen patiently? Does s/he work well with other students to meet the purpose of the group in which s/he is participating?

Evidence of a growing comprehension of the human condition is the most difficult of the three major areas to measure. As the one student responded on his evaluation sheet, "This is pretty heavy stuff." No one course can be credited for this kind of comprehension. Writing itself and discussion with others can be initiators of this kind of growth; the instructor can look for an expression of this high level of learning in the student's choice of content.

After reading the students' papers submitted in their folders, the instructor adds the following midterm evaluation sheet to each folder before returning it to the student. The midterm grade is only that, an indication that if the instructor were issuing a final grade at this time, this is what the grade would be. The grade can be raised or lowered by the end of the term. It is not added to a grade for the second half of the term with an average being made of the two.

Midterm Evaluation

Name _____

Grade _____

These are the things the instructor looks for when considering your class performance, the criteria on which the evaluation of your work is based.

1. Your writing. This is the most important aspect of your grade. From where did you start? Where are you now in terms of sophistication of subject matter (awareness of the human condition), use of narrative techniques, use of expository techniques, and accuracy of mechanics? Is there a consistent quality in your work, a reflection of time and effort that gives support to your growth in these areas?

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Suggestions for the second half of the term:

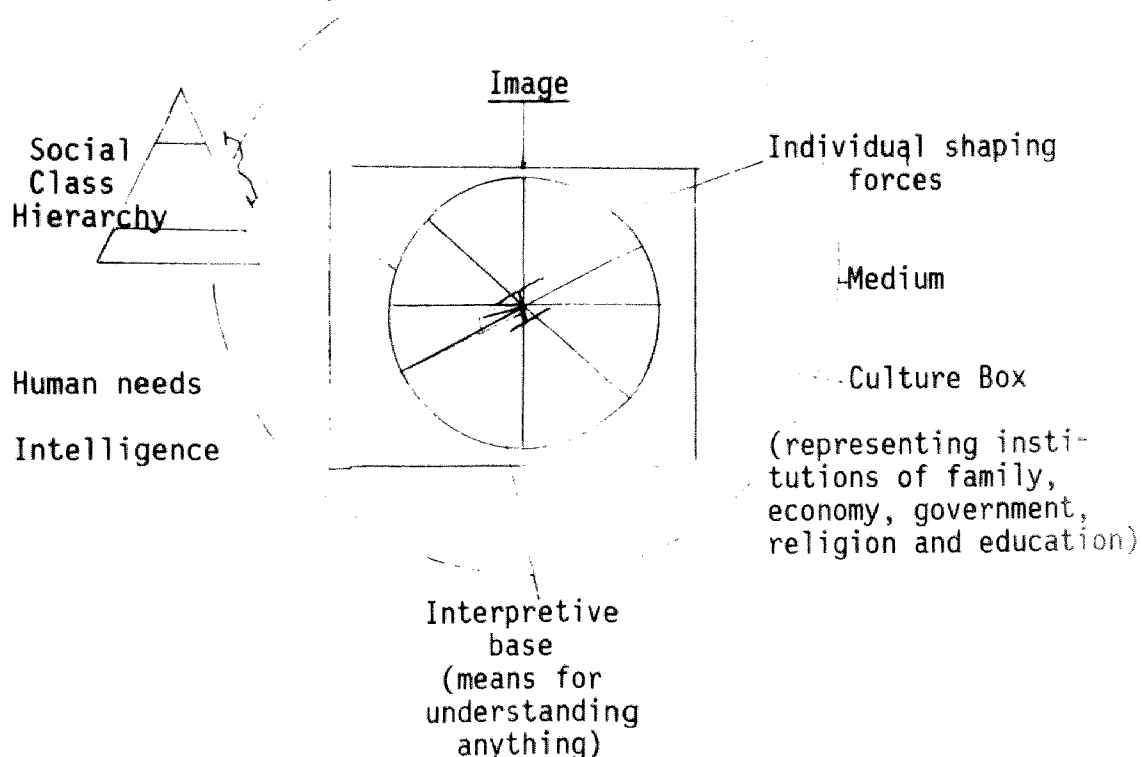
2. Your role as an evaluator of writing and participant in class activities. Do you contribute to class discussion either voluntarily or when invited to do so? (Quality, rather than quantity of remarks, is important.) Have you begun to establish your own criteria for good writing? Do you apply these standards to your own work and the work of others? Do you cooperate with others in large and small group activities, contributing by your actions to the atmosphere of the class as a learning place?
3. Attendance and record of assignments. Have you missed more than three class sessions? Have you completed all of the assignments? Have you submitted your work on time or made arrangements with the instructor when you have not been able to finish an assignment on the date due? Do you read and follow directions?

Recognizing and Using an Outside Source

To inhabit a world is to possess images of how things are beyond the reach of one's immediate experience, images that have implications for how one experiences the immediate and that generates values which make claims on the conduct of one's life.

The following structure is one used to introduce the second expository assignment, the recognition and use of an outside source.

Figure 3: Viewpoint Structure⁸



⁷ S.M. Halloran, "On the End of Rhetoric Classical and Modern," College English, 36, No. 6 (1975), 625.

⁸ Joan Fulton, Curriculum Design, Ninth Grade Humanities, Urbandale Comm. Schs., Urbandale, Ia., 1970.

As soon as students are told that the next assignment is to be one using an outside source, there is an audible sigh from them, implying a mixed reaction of relief that now the choice of content will, in part, be made for them, and of boredom that this paper will be a report on a magazine article or on excerpts from books. The students think they know this assignment quite well. It was often presented under the label of research paper, and they remember how it went: finding out what they "thought" about an assigned topic by which series of articles and/or excerpts presented the strongest case, the most easily accessible set of sources to quote. It wasn't true research beginning with a hypothesis followed by a time of digging and thinking and correlating to test the hypothesis, but rather it was a time of stringing together paraphrased sections from outside sources, the stringing transitions often being the only student-generated lines within the so-called research paper. The resulting products, though excellent exercises for learning the proper forms of an outline, footnotes, and a bibliography, were revealments of outside sources using students rather than students using outside sources.

The viewpoint structure, with which this discussion began, is a means for students to consider the differences between outside and inside determiners of a given image of reality as

well as the influence both have for an individual formulating viewpoints. The outside determiners are sources that can be profitably used, but first they must be identified and understood. Individual shaping forces include a person's family, peers, community, school, church, neighborhood, work, and ambition. Cultural institutions include those of family, government, economy, education, and religion. The social hierarchy is the class system. The medium is the dominant means of communication utilized by a culture; America's is electronic technology and includes the media.

The instructor can ask students seemingly simple yet important questions: What ideas, questions, prejudices, notions, etc. do you have stored? And more importantly, can you trace them to their sources? By first understanding where an idea came from, a student can begin to question the quality of her/his opinions and establish a set of criteria for measurement before s/he turns opinions into judgments.

After the large group discussion, the instructor gives students the following handout. Students continue to have the opportunity to revise their papers after small group evaluation sessions and again after receiving written comments from the instructor.

Recognizing and Using an Outside Source: Expository Assignment
#2

The process of learning to write is not unlike the process of maturation; both are a development of more complex relationships with the world around you.

1. Often what you feel and what you think are influenced by your sense impressions. (This may be reason for learning narrative techniques first. Recognition of the connection between feeling and believing may be reason for using narrative techniques within the expository framework.)
2. There is a need for learning to subordinate your own experience to the idea, issue, or institution under discussion in a paper.
3. This is not to suggest that you write impersonally. The personal dimension--important to all you writing--should be evident in the selection, interpretation, and use of evidence, as well as the sense of commitment you bring to the topic.
4. In the next assignment, use some external validation for your paper--possibilities are data, historical information, scientific reports, expert opinion, use of a novel, a poem, a song, etc. Your choice of sources may necessitate a trip to the library.

Suggestions for Writing

- You might select a topic about which you have changed your views and write a paper that explains when and why you changed your mind.
- You might select a controversial topic and argue for or against a certain stance in regard to that topic.
- How about a different approach in terms of tone and style? You might write a parody, fable, or parable about some aspect of life on campus or elsewhere.
- You might choose a critical issue of the twentieth century and write a paper discussing how it touches or influences your life.

--You might actually visit a local institution (school, nursing home, city council meeting, etc.) and write a paper containing your reportorial views of what goes on there.

The possibilities are endless, but try to incorporate some outside evidence in your paper, no matter what content/approach you choose.

⁹ Adapted from Jill Wilson Cohn's Writing: The Personal Voice (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975), pp. 159-60.

Three Representative Papers: Outside Source

I LAUGHED SO HARD, IT HURT

The opening
description
does attract
the reader's
attention.

And, perchance,
if s/he
should
laugh out
loud or
wryly
smile,
you make
her/him
one of those
behaving
in a way
you
deplore.

A friend of mine asked me, "How many Polocks does it take to take a shower?" To my negative shrug, he replied, "Fifty. One to take the shower and forty-nine to spit."

Encouraged by my laughter, my friend continued, "How do you drive a Polock crazy?" He answered himself, "Put him in a round room and tell him there's a penny in the corner."

My niece and a small friend were laughing at a cartoon. Wile E. Coyote sets a string across the road. The other end is tied to a huge boulder, teetering precariously on the edge of an overhanging cliff. The Roadrunner dashes across the string. Nothing happens. Stepping out into the road to investigate, the coyote is smashed by the rock, which falls a little later than he expected. This brought a fresh burst of giggling from the two children.

Some readers
might think
you are jumping
from one
example to the
next without
aid of
transitions.
I find the
examples
intriguing,
encouraging
me to read on
to see what
you are going
to do with
these examples.

I enjoy reading "The Better Half," a comic strip in my daily newspaper. Today's scene showed Stanley and Harriet, his wife, quarreling. In the middle of the argument, Stanley says to his wife, "Harriet, I'd enjoy these little domestic discussions with you more if your mother wasn't always standing behind you with her fists clenched."

Every week Mr. Bill, a character from "Saturday Night Live," has a new experience. Last week he visited New York City with Mr. Sluggo. Mr. Sluggo tore Mr. Bill's arm off, threw Mr. Bill's dog under the wheels of a bus, and dropped Mr. Bill off the Empire State Building. I never miss an episode.

Your use of
first person at
these points
is a very
good way of
indicating to
the reader that
you, too, are
capable of

At this point, it
is effective
to draw
together the
relationships
of the examples
as well as
stating why you
are using them.

These four examples have one very important idea in common. Each is a form of entertainment intended to amuse. What's funny about making

the
reactions
you
denounce.

This is an important question.
 an entire nationality appear stupid? If a rock fell on me, or if someone tore my arm off and killed my dog, I wouldn't be laughing very long. Mother-in-law jokes may be cute in a cartoon, but when I consider how I would feel if my father hated my (sweet, old) grandma, I see things differently.

Does this mean that our society finds pain and suffering humorous? The facts are clear; our humor is cruel. Instead of just laughing, maybe we should question just what our sense of humor says about us.

Jody, your final paragraph makes clear that you have no heavy solutions to the problem you present, that you are asking the reader to question along with you what this so-called humor says about us as people. Your use of first person plural is a way of structurally strengthening this unified look you call for. In a later paper, you may want to dig deeper, explore a little more, and formulate some tentative solutions.
 SO YOU WANT TO BE PRESIDENT, HUH?

From the first paragraph on the bite of your satire is strong; your purpose of pointing out deficiencies in the political system is clear.

So you want to be President of the good old U.S. of A., huh? You know you'd just love to destroy the world with a flick of your finger, or maybe you only want to turn Columbia into your own private stash, but your last name isn't Kennedy and you don't know exactly how to become the most powerful man on the face of the earth. Well if you've been having delusions of power and grandeur then this paper's for you. However, to save time, if you happen to be black, brown, red, yellow, communist, socialist, Nazi, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, under 35, over 65, too rich, too poor, homosexual, Ralph Nader, or a woman of any color, age or persuasion, you might as well just toss this essay into the garbage because it won't do you a bit of good. If you qualify so far though, read on.

The first thing you'll need to run for The audience office, Mr. Candidate, is money and lots of *well not* it. At first this would appear difficult; a *ignore your* virtual nobody such as yourself raising funds *words, whether* to become President appears next to impossible, *they are kidding* in fact. However, if you just keep in mind a *their heads in* few simple rules you will never encounter any *agreement or* problem in this area. *adapting responses*
to your cynicism
you have these -
they will read on.

1) The oil companies in this country would finance a weasel for office if he promised not to lower their depreciation allowances. (See election results from '68 and '72 for verification.)

2) If that's not enough, just remember that there's a giant cesspool of Dairymen's Associations and IT&T's out there literally begging for a candidate to say the five magic words to them: "I won't close the loopholes." Presto bingo! You'll have more secret funds than Carter has liver pills.

You have most certainly done your homework.
Now you've got the big bucks, but just exactly what do you do with them? First thing is to get yourself a talented, intelligent staff, capable of running a national campaign. This is easily accomplished. There are hundreds of potential kingmakers making shady deals on Wall Street and giving tours in Disneyland just waiting for someone like you to come along and offer them a cushy government job once you're elected. Now your staff is together and you're ready to start your campaign.

The first step in any campaign is to deny *I like the* you are running for the nomination of your *approach of* party. Your next step is to establish a broad *using the* political base of power to insure your nomination at the convention. This can be simply *step-by-step suggestions* accomplished through a series of bribes, *employed* blackmail and extortion, handled by some *for a process* important labor union or mafia leader in jail *description.* ~~you will~~ have promised clemency ~~to~~ after the *The structural* election. Up to now, the whole campaign has *usage gives* been gravy. Once you're nominated though, it *make* gets down to brass tacks. *seriousness*

Your vice-president ideally should be a total unknown. This results in lots of free publicity as the press tries to figure out who he is. With any luck it will never come out that he's the brother your family always kept locked in the basement. If it does, who'd believe it?

to the paper.

Now you've started campaigning, and in order to make a successful run at the Presidency you'll need to remember the following two items.

1) You'll need lots and lots of personal appearances, handshaking and brown-nosing.

2) You'll need a media campaign that would make Hitler's blitzkrieg look like a powder puff football game.

In regard to the first item, your speeches at any gathering should always be light and optimistic, praising the good and ignoring the bad in this country. After all, most people are sick and tired of constantly hearing about how America is going to hell one way or another and want to hear the lighter side of things. I cannot emphasize the importance of this fact enough and will give you an example to clarify the situation.

Imagine the American voting public as being one big pair of buns and you and your opponent as a couple of hemorrhoids. You, hopefully a Democrat, are on the left cheek and your opponent, a Republican, is on the right. Now imagine election day as one big bottle of Preparation H, except that there's only enough solution left to get rid of one roid now and the prescription can't be refilled for the next four years. The public is obviously going to get rid of the one that is the biggest pain. They hate both of you, want to get rid of both of you, but can't and will settle for wiping out the greater of two evils. I realize this is a painful analogy but it's true, so whatever you do, always make yourself a lesser pain than your opponent, no matter how wishy-washy he is. You say this makes no sense? I agree. But where is it carved in stone that politics is supposed to be logical?

Moving on to the media campaign it starts to get a little more sticky. Although it is well known that TV is the best means of gaining

most definitely
this is a
graphic
analogy.
You run the
risk of
alienating
the more
squeamish
in your
audience,
but even
that would
reinforce
the "head
in the sand"
attitude
of the
American
public,
wouldn't
it?

support and making yourself known, it's also the easiest way to get burned. For obvious reasons your ads should not follow or precede any commercials for deodorants, mouthwash, Tidy Bowl or sanitary napkins. It's also a good idea to avoid the Merrill Lynch commercial. You know, the one where all the bulls come charging into your living room. *You make me smile.*

As mentioned earlier, your speeches should generally be upbeat, but there are a few safe subjects you can attack that are guaranteed to score points with the majority of the voters. In your ads and appearances always criticize one of the following:

- 1) The irresponsible liberal press.
- 2) Crime and the courts for being too lenient on criminals.
- 3) The elite eastern intellectuals who live in ivy-covered towers.
- 4) The inefficient federal bureaucracy.
- 5) If the Republicans are in office, attack the depression this country will be in.
- 6) If a Democrat is in power, attack the war we'll be fighting.

All these criticisms should center around one theme: that if it weren't for the above mentioned we would indeed be a much greater country. Also, never offer any solutions to the above problems. You may not have enough common sense to buy a bus ticket or come in out of the rain, but the public doesn't have to know that. Just don't open your mouth and remove all doubt.

Some other helpful hints to get you elected are:

- 1) Tatoo an American flag on your forehead.

*You are
absolutely
irreverent,
and it's
delightful!*

2) Join the American Legion, the V.F.W. and the Shriners.

3) Fly to Chicago and kiss Mayor Daley's ass on national TV.

4) Fly to Alabama and call George Wallace a patriotic American.

5) Become a football fan.

6) Buy Billy Graham a \$300 suit.

All of the above can be safely accomplished *your words* no matter what party you are with. All these *are strong;* measures are tried and true and never fail to *your bitterness* hit the American public in their soft spot, *is clearly* their intelligence. Now you may be saying to *apparent.* yourself, well this all sounds fine and dandy *No one can* but surely the average voter will realize I'm *doubt that* a two-bit phony. Wrong. As a late great man *a personality* once said, there's a sucker born every minute *stands* and nobody ever went broke underestimating the *behind* intelligence of the American public. If you *these words,* just keep a level head and your mouth shut, you can't lose. Of course, there will always be that vocal minority who will attempt to slander you, but if you just ignore them the worst they can do is paint a bunch of nasty four letter words on signs and picket your rallies. This always works to your advantage because your average voter will either vote for you against them or against them for you, depending on how you look at it.

Another rule of thumb is never ever slander your opponent. In most cases this will backfire, since any dirt that can be dug up against your opponent can usually be thrown right back in your face. We've all been caught with our hands in the cookies at one time or another so just let the skeletons stay where they are.

So now it's election night and you're tense, nervous, wondering about the outcome of the election. If you've followed all the rules in this paper, you have nothing to worry about. And if your campaign manager has anything on the ball at all there should be more fake ballots being stuffed into election boxes than Chins in a Chinese phone book.

Though you probably won't need that kind of help, it never hurts. It was the extra hundred thousand votes cast by corpses in Cook County that gave the election to Kennedy back in '60. And once you're President there's no way they can drag you out.

use a common sense -

This reference may offend the majority - Americans in your audience? Do you care?

This line negates the reality of the process of impeachment for which there is an historical precedent.

So, now you're the big enchilada, the head honcho, the President. Want to smoke some dope at the Lincoln Memorial? Go right ahead, who's going to stop you? And just think, you owe it all to this little paper and the fact you were born in the land of the free and the home of the brave. *The final line is one last slap at the so-called democratic principles of our country.* --Steve Vorbau

Steve, as my comments reflect I hear you, I respond to what you are saying, I follow your thinking with you. You have used outside sources; they haven't used you.

FREEDOM

The first person plural pronoun is a way of indicating that you are including yourself and your readers as members of a same group for considering the question you raise. Why, then, do you switch to "people" in the final sentence?

"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it..." *When you directly quote an outside source, you need to give credit to that source in the form of a footnote or, less formally, within the text itself.*

When we talk about a democratic government, we mean government based essentially on what is called the will of the people and the principle of majority rule. But how can we hope to discover what people really want unless we keep alive the chance for the free and fair discussion of all public issues? Only by the open clash of opinions, the matching of arguments and the comparing of evidence can people hope to form a fair and reasonable judgment.

As a journalism major looking forward to a future in newspaper writing, I see the press of this country as the most powerful instrument. *Here you give yourself a reason for speaking; the reason adds to your credentials.*

one sentence
revising
constitutes
a
paragraph.

created for the free exchange of opinions,
opinions on which the process of democracy
depends.

Again, this should read "to those ^{in order to} ~~apart~~"

To the people who live in democratic countries like Canada, England or the United States, freedom of the press is considered a normal part of national life. Yet the press began its existence without any tinge of liberty. It took more than three centuries of libel laws and court cases to secure a moderate degree of freedom. I often ask myself, do we actually have a "free press?" If words in a constitution can give a nation freedom, we have always had it in this country. The First Amendment to the Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom...of the press."

remain
consistent
in your
overall
point of view.
A perfect
rarely
successfully
blend more
than two
points of
view.

We talk about a "free press" as though the term were self-explanatory. This is not true. What do we mean by "free?" Free from what? I think of myself as "free" to come and go as I please. I drive on the right. I stop for stop signs (sometimes). I have to wait for the lights and keep an eye on the speedometer. There are boundaries and degrees of freedom.

Freedom of the press has meaning and importance only when it is applied to actual situations. Used as a working rule, one finds no clear answer to any specific question. Freedom of the press, like all our other civil liberties, is a relative and not an absolute right. The press is limited by censorship, by laws covering sedition, obscenity, libel, and contempt of court. A popular example of the limited free press is the Daniel Schorr case of a year ago.

one is not a
working
rule -
Another
point of
view
switch

Schorr, a CBS reporter, somehow obtained classified information made top secret by a request from President Gerald Ford. Schorr sent the story to a local newspaper, and they proceeded to publish a long section of the confidential report. The result was that Schorr was fired from his job and made a

you could simply say mocked.
 mockery of in front of the so-called Ethics
 Committee in Congress. Schorr stood by the
 First Amendment as his defense. I would have ^{the mere}
 done the same thing. A journalist who would ^{assertion that}
 risk his well-paid job and put himself through ^{you would}
 the courtroom-like interrogation deserves to ^{have done}
 be looked upon as a credit to journalism, a ^{the same thing}
 hero for ~~people~~ ^{who} believe we have a right to ^{to add}
 know what goes on. For those who look negatively ^{credence}
 upon the actions of Schorr, I will repeat what ^{to Schorr's}
 one journalist once said: "In defending the ^{stand. Why}
 rights of others to say things that we do not ^{not quote Schorr}
 agree with, we are actually defending our own ^{himself as to}
 right of self-expression." ^{why he}
 Again, you must give ^{made}
 credit to the source. ^{the}
 stand?

Transition
 needed here --
 you're
 making
 an abrupt
 jump
 without
 aid of a
 connecting
 thought.

-- The main reason for the restriction of
 the news is to protect the public welfare. I
 ask the question: are the curbs upon the ^{instead of asking}
 freedom of the press tighter than they need to ^{this question,}
 be in order to protect the public safety and ^{why not}
 welfare? If so, then our press is not so free ^{develop}
 as it should be. "I disapprove of what you ^{an argument}
 say, but I will defend to the death your right ^{that, indeed,}
 to say it..." ^{the curbs}
^{are tighter}
^{than they}
^{need to be?}

--Fred Mares

The use of circular construction to return to
 the quote with which you began the paper
 is a sound one, giving a sense of reinforcement
 to the central idea of the paper; but, as it is,
 it seems tacked on -- not integrated into the
 structure of the final paragraph.

Writing Criticism

An understanding of the differences and connections between an opinion and a judgment must be made by students before they can see the bridge between an outside source assignment and the writing of a piece of criticism. An opinion is a quick reaction to something, an "off the cuff" sharing of a like or a dislike. No one has to support an opinion; opinions are essentially matters of taste. The composition textbooks that devote an entire chapter to the "opinion paper" as though it is a writing technique deny students the important realization of how a judgment differs from an opinion.

There is a conscious process to the making and the sharing of a judgment: A person looks at something open-mindedly, takes it in, interprets it, then applies a set of criteria (a set of standards, a series of measuring sticks) to determine the value of the thing -- only then can a judgment be said to have been made. The process of making judgments of worth and value is not a new one to students participating in this curriculum; they practice this process each time they respond to peers' papers in evaluative sessions; it is certainly not a new process to people who are constantly building criteria to judge everyday products, events, and experiences. Sometimes, however, students

are not conscious of their uses of this judging process and/or aware of the intellectual necessity of making an audience conscious of the criteria used to make judgments.

Before students receive a criticism assignment, it is useful for them to participate in an activator which gives them a chance to build a set of criteria for judging something other than another student's paper or a piece of professional writing. The activator here included is one designed for a young student audience, and makes use of content that might quickly trigger student responses. The instructor using the activator can substitute differing content if greater sophistication is desired, for the process of critically assessing remains the same no matter what material is being assessed.

The instructor asks students, "Who makes the best pizza in this community?" After hearing a variety of establishments' names from class members, the instructor asks students to support their choices with specific reasons. The subsequent list usually includes references to the consistency of the pizza's crust, the amount and number of toppings, the price, the service of the establishment, the physical atmosphere... sometimes even remarks concerning other diners.

This activator takes only a few minutes, after which the instructor can point out to students that they have a) built a

list of criteria, b) made a judgment, and c) evaluated a particular product. They are aware that they have supported statements made; and, once again, they have experienced some success with a process before they have committed that process to a written form.

After the discussion, the instructor gives the following handout to students. The remainder of the period is used to evaluate samples of criticism; the three representative papers included after the handout are possible examples.

Writing Criticism: Expository Assignment #3

Critical writing requires you to stretch beyond your immediate encounters with self, place, and others. Broadly speaking, the central function of criticism is to offer an evaluation or judgment of a work or phenomenon.

As a critic you will be discovering and clarifying the abstract values and standards that guide your evaluations. Most of these values have their roots in your prior experience. Your opinions about art, morality, and social responsibility, for example, are shaped by what you have seen, felt, heard, or read.

In a very real sense, criticism is a natural extension of the earlier writing you have done for this class. As a critic you will be continuing to discover, explore, and shape yourself. You will be discovering the sources of judgments and exploring the reasons for your judgments. At the same time you will be extending yourself beyond your immediate sensations and encounters with self, place, and others. When you criticize, you are developing your tastes, generalizing your views, and clarifying the principles that structure your opinions. Finally, you are using those principles and generalizations to make judgments about the world.

Remember that criticism is not a pejorative term; a critic is one who responds to the merits as well as the shortcomings of a subject.

Your choice of topic as a critical writer is nearly unlimited. You may focus on works of art, institutions, monuments, customs, sports events, or other phenomena. It is important, of course, for you to select a topic that interests you.

One fundamental of writing criticism is to consider how much the reader needs to know of the thing being criticized. Valuable critical writing doesn't try to cover; it focuses.

Your judgment or assessment is derived from the critical standards (criteria) you have. Make sure those criteria are present in your paper. Critical judgments are usually guided by aesthetic (having to do with beauty or taste), moral (having to do with right or wrong), psychological, historical, or social perspectives. Considering your judgment according to these categories can be helpful.

Your paper should clearly illustrate how a work, trend, event, etc. either does or does not meet your standards. You will want to select examples and details that are both accurate and reliable.

Possibilities

1. Write a critical evaluation of one or more of your own papers.
2. Critique a short story or a book.
3. Attend a campus event and review it.
4. Write a review of the television program you most like or least like.
5. Critically evaluate a film, painting, photograph, sculpture, dance, etc.
6. Write a critical paper that discusses the social or psychological relevance of a cartoon strip.
7. Write a critical paper about advertising.
8. Criticize social customs or current trends.
9. Critique current music trends, or a particular group, or a specific album, or concert.
10. Critically evaluate this class.¹⁰

(You may revise following small group evaluation session and after receiving written comments from the instructor.)

¹⁰ Adapted from Cohn, pp. 161-83.

Three Representative Papers: Criticism

A CHEAP HORROR MOVIE

This word seems out of place with the adjectives that follow in the sentence.

You might indicate that Alice Cooper is associated with a
 When the name Alice Cooper is brought to mind, one would normally think of a bunch of *group*.
 insane, obscene, homosexual, perverted degenerates with the lead singer Alice being the head queer and maniac; I was no exception to this way of thinking. When the opportunity arose for me to see Alice Cooper, I was very curious to see just what this was that I had been hearing so much about.

This is an abrupt jump between paragraphs. You might make some indication of buying a ticket and entering the
 The stage was not like the bare stage featured by most rock and roll bands. It was *auditorium*, built on a number of levels with towers, platforms, lighted archways and stairways. Huge glistening silver balls and gilded human forms hung from the gold towers. It was very impressive and my eyes were continually roving the stage (throughout the whole show.) The band began to play and Alice lurched and pranced *good use of vivid verbs* through the thick smoke to the front of the stage, *resembling a crazed mass murder*. He looked astounding. *You give no details that would make you draw this generalization.*

repetitive phrasing

He was wearing white leotards and tights, ripped and torn. They were stained a repulsive shade of red around the crotch as if he had been bleeding there. He had thigh-length leopard skin boots and his eyes and mouth were covered with black fangs and lines drawn with mascara. This appearance was shocking at first and I found it somewhat repulsive, but I also found it difficult to tear my eyes away from him for even a few seconds (throughout the whole show.)

you use description so effectively

The music was standard, raw, hard rock and roll. ~~and to hear the powerful music was exciting~~; but any good rock band can ~~do that~~ *create excitement*, and I'm sure there are a lot of groups more technically skilled in making music. But this was different from any other rock concert;

this was theatrical and theater is emotion.

Alice gets people to react to the sex, death and violence. I was experiencing the most ^{This sentence seems premature since you have not yet described "sex, death, and violence."} intense emotions ever, and this was a rock and roll band doing it and not a movie theater.

Alice let a live boa constrictor crawl about his body and between his legs, and I was practically hypnotized by this, but I was thoroughly disgusted when he pushed the snake's head

inside his own mouth. I was laughing almost hysterically when Alice fondled mannequin parts. He hugged them and made love to them and I laughed like I never had before. Later, during the song called "Dead Babies," he took a hatchet and slashed a doll to pieces with simulated blood and all. He later had his head chopped off by a guillotine and I heard isolated screams throughout the auditorium.

^{hypnotized} They even had a fake bloody head and dead body, and it really looked real. He later came back out with white tails, top hat and long sword with dollar bills on it and drove the crowd into frenzy when he teased them with the dollar bills.

This show got a reaction and emotion, something other rock bands have failed to do.

It got an intense reaction, either negative or positive, but it got a very strong reaction.

Many people have put down Alice Cooper, saying it's morally wrong to allow teen-agers to see the violence and death, and that it will make them more violent and aggressive when they leave.

Nobody ~~will be violent~~ after seeing this show, drained is more like it.

They have already seen all the violence and I doubt if they could handle any more.

I don't see any difference between the beheading of the star of the show and seeing Dracula suck the blood from a victim's throat.

^{Can you evidence this statement with a specific comparison?}

I myself, being a lover of blood, gore and murder, found the whole show fascinating. Never have I experienced so many intense emotions in such a short time. I was shocked and disgusted, hypnotized and laughing uncontrollably or just feeling highly aggressive.

^{What does this sentence have to do with the main idea of the paragraph?}

Adrenalin flushed through my body and I left very much drained and entirely satisfied. At other rock concerts kids yell and clap their hands and leave with nothing left but a buzz in their ears. But when people walked out of this concert, they looked disgusted to the point of regurgitation, or in a state of shock, or they were hypnotized to where their bodies were trembling. *Is this a common reaction to being hypnotized?*

The idea is reversed here. Kids are exposed to this form of entertainment

Alice uses surrealism and sadism to get people to react, and kids today are seeing a form of entertainment that has never been exposed to them before. One could easily mistake the people leaving the concert for people leaving the horror movie of the century. And everybody enjoys a good horror movie, doesn't he? *I'm not sure if you're praising or denouncing the performance.* Your final question is a means of indicating that perhaps your self-revelation of "being a lover of blood, gore, and murder" was not entirely serious.

--John Stevenson

ONE FLEW OVER THE COLORADO WEST *Clever title -*

"Yeh, I seen when this was a nice city, none of this here smog. It's them damn flatlanders invadin' our hills; they come out lookin' for gold or land or sumthin', and then they's mad when it's all gone, an' blame Colorado. Oughta up a big fence around the state; keep 'em all out!"¹

There is a real and present danger facing the people of Colorado, one that a single name cannot describe. We cannot talk of wildly spreading front range development without telling of its deadly end product, over-population. We cannot talk of the pillaging of

¹ Philosophical old wino on a street corner in downtown Denver. *who could ask for more impressive credentials!*

the Rocky Mountains without telling of its deadly end product, the destruction of natural resources.

This is
an effective
way of
quitting
yourself
an experienced
base from
which to
speak.

Now it appears
that your
audience
is made up
of only
fellow
Coloradoans.
Do you
mean for
them to be
your sole
audience?

As one of two and one half million Coloradans, I realize the inevitable after years of hoping that the obvious was somehow just a bad dream. I speak for the whole. We are tired of outsiders' views of "high prices and uneasy feelings," and pity those who honestly believe that Coloradans are only good for "Coors beer and ski wax."¹ For these reasons, we have decided to undertake the only option available to an enlightened people in a snowblind world. We, the people of Colorado, have decided to secede from the nation. *The surprise of this statement*

raises the curiosity of the reader, signaling to
I have here outlined a number of advantages *her/him* to my fellow mountaineers that will come as a result of the secession. We must keep in mind *that there is a satirical intent to this paper.* that we can become a totally self-sufficient state; we can live off rocks and pine trees, and we can keep our favorite resident, Olympian Frank Shorter. Furthermore, we can by secession:

- The material to the left, a colon must comprise a*
1. quit being referred to as "Nebraska's *complete* neighbors to the west," and "a *sentence.*" suburb of L.A."
 2. extend our boundary line to the top of Mt. Evan's 14,000 feet.
 3. dam up the Colorado River and see how long the Missouri lasts.

Now you include
others in
the audience,
but the
pronoun change
constitutes a
confusing point
of view switch.

Of course, there are a few advantages you, the forty-nine states left in the nation, will enjoy. Some of these are:

1. Connecticut can now come after California in alphabetical order.

¹ Donald Morrill, contributor of a foreign language column to the Times-Delphic, number one in standing among other high school-level papers. *If your audience is made up of only fellow Drake University students who will recognize the Times-Delphic as the university's campus paper, your satire is effective. If you wish to reach a broader audience, you need to consider that this reference will mean nothing to them.*

2. North Dakota can move up in rank of admission to the union, taking over our thirty-eighth position.
3. As Colorado is the only perfectly square-shaped state, we will no longer be an oddity in the state boundary jigsaw puzzles.

what about Wyoming?

Our former fellow Americans will no longer have access to the world's best skiing, historical Pike's Peak, or Colorado Kool-Aid, but we're sure you'll find compensations.

Maybe Iowa skiing or historic Bronx Park? *fragment --*

solve the problem by joining the phrase to the previous sentence by
Finally, for all you out-of-staters, we'd like to leave you something before you go, a quotation from one whom you consider Colorado's favorite son. (Actually we'd just like to leave the favorite son with you.) "Take me home, country roads, to the place I belong, West Virginia."¹ (This quotation makes no sense in relation to this subject, but then, how sensible can a man be who was born in the summer of his twenty-seventh year?) *means a comma or a dash.* *good line!*

You may have the shrill songster. We have decided, however, to take with us our derelicts, ski bums, Coors connoisseurs, and even those enlightened flatlanders settled here in the Rocky Mountains high. Those of us who have spent any appreciable amount of time here, and for some it takes only a weekend, have seen the inner beauty: the unmatched mountains, the haunting ghost towns, the simple mountain people. To those who take an occasional jaunt to the mountains, who feel this is their winter/summer playground, and for some reason think Coloradans are here only to serve the ski areas, we say, "Go anywhere but west, young man. Anywhere!" *you make good use of an old quotation -- paraphrase for a new meaning.*

--Mary Shick
many, this is an effective piece of critical writing, making your point with a satirical bite. You might, however, reconsider the audience and rethink your use of phrases for consistency in point given.
John Denver, the flatlander's impression of the great out-of-doors--the Coloradan's impression of the great out-of-tune.

Title: } Remember that this is
your first opportunity
to catch your reader's
attention.

There are
times
when
directly
addressing
the reader
with the
second
person
pronoun
is most
effective.
This may be
one of those
times since
it allows
you to sum
it up, too,
once
responded
in a
stereotyped
manner.
The admission
keeps you
from
sounding
condescending
to the
audience.

The
proper
phrase is
trompe l'oeil

When you think of early American art, what first comes to your mind? Paintings of cowboys, Indians and wild plains? Portraits of stiff generals and presidents in dark settings? Grandma Moses' style? George Washington by Gilbert Stuart? If you think of any of these, you're not alone. Until recently, when I went to the Des Moines Art Center Bicentennial Showing, I also stereotyped nineteenth century art.

As I roamed among the rows of heavy gold-framed paintings, I began to notice that four basic styles of early American art were represented, styles I usually did not think of when I considered the paintings of the eighteenth hundreds. Perhaps at this point in the paper

you should identify and define the four basic styles. *one sentence rarely constitutes a paragraph.*
Still Life by William M. Harnett caught my eye at once. It is a small painting, no more than a foot and half square, that looks so real that if you could reach into the painting, you could quickly relieve it of its candlestick and vase. In a carefully arranged composition, Harnett has painstakingly reproduced the sheet music, a clarinet, a pewter candlestick and candle, some books and a Delft crock in the trompe de' oeil style (trompe d' oeil being French for "to fool the eye," a style of unique and unquestionable realism). The positioning of the pieces is such that the eye travels over the entire canvas and creates an interesting sense of movement in an otherwise "still" life. *if the cliché is taken literally, resulting in a laughable one.*

the eye doesn't do the creating.

Realism is also uniquely represented by John Copley's Midshipman Augustus Brine.

Standing at an angle on a life-size canvas is a quite young and debonair-looking seaman in full uniform. Copley's style catches the vigorous yet subtle qualities of the youth in the same basic way as Franz Hals--with strokes that look like they were swatted onto the canvas and hurriedly mixed--whereas (his) effects of light and dark were actually painstakingly achieved. Thick and pure color is often used

you're doing a good job of helping the reader to visualize the paintings through the verbal descriptions you draw.

for highlights on the midshipman's brocade, buttons, and wavy hair. Up close, the painting is a masterpiece of swift, wild strokes. Yet from a few yards back, Midshipman Brine comes to life in full color and style and most certainly would walk right off the canvas should chance allow.

your final sentence is an effective one for illustrating how well the painting seemed to you.

A form of Impressionism in its basic sense is superbly represented by the light pastel paintings of Mary Cassatt. One in particular, Young Mother Sewing, defies all the people who stereotype portraits of this period as those of stuffy generals. A woman in her mid-twenties is seated on an open sunny porch with her young child leaning into her lap. The total effect is one of cheerful spontaneity--the child is looking with charming inquisitiveness at the viewer, the dress and material of the mother are white and light- feeling, and the background catches one moment in which the sunlight burned brightly on the windows and a pot of fresh flowers; everything together has an overall hazy effect. Pale aquas, off-whites, and blues are the basic colors used, although some black stripes added in the mother's dress for pattern and movement. Cassatt used bold strokes to achieve her effect of one instant in time, thereby creating an unforgettable painting.

The dash is a casual piece of punctuation. You might consider using a semi-colon here and omitting the one earlier. Substituting a period for it and beginning a new sentence.

Did I see anything I disliked? Most certainly I did. The basic style that all art historians call primitive was well represented at this showing -- paintings done by unknowns that were previously stacked away in dusty attics (where they well belong) were now removed and exhibited as "antiques" and "marvelous representations" of early American art. One such example is an atrocious portrait by Erashis Field entitled Ellen Tuttle Bangs. The young girl portrayed is seemingly in her early teens, but unfortunately is a late bloomer or (more likely) the artist was unskilled in capturing the essence of youth. Her dark hair is severely pulled back, causing her ears

The reader might question your use of "unforgettable" had you not so clearly held a vivid memory of the painting. The parenthetical phrase reinforces your dislike of this style of art.

to stick out and appear large. On her face is a vacant expression of disinterest. The total technique is one of no dimension -- everything on the canvas is flat with no roundness, tonal qualities, or highlights employed at all. The colors are too harsh and bright for the subject matter, and the composition itself adds nothing at all as it is a straight-on, full length portrait. Is this flat, dull, unrealistic scene to be hailed as great art of the nineteenth century? Most certainly it stands as one of the styles of the day, but it by no means ranks with the three previous paintings. *you make clear your critical judgment of this style.*

hypocrite Altogether, the show was a pleasure to attend. The old cracking canvases done by known and unknown artists were fascinating (beyond belief) -- *as a common here* transporting me for an evening to the realm of the early American artist. *Even more, you indicated that you were transported for* -- Cheryl Madera an evening to experience life with early American people.

Cheryl, knowing that your major is art, I have an additional reason for placing some trust in your critical judgments. You might share this added credential with the reader, thereby increasing the sense of ethos permeating the paper.

Asking Oneself: Who Am I? What Have I Learned?

With the writing of the final assignments, students will have come full circle in the second half of the course, "full circle" in the sense that they began experimenting with personalized exposition in the "What's Bugging You?" paper, extended beyond actual experience to utilize an outside source, made critical judgments using a set of criteria, and are now ready to give partial answers to two universal questions: Who am I? What have I learned? These questions call for both a unique personal response and a recognition of the connection between an individual and others with shared concerns.

Obviously, the curriculum design has not called for in-depth use of formal proofs as further extensions of the use of logic in persuasion, nor has it included specific assignments for writing about literature, or stressed in particular the mechanical aspects of writing a research paper including footnotes and bibliography. These omissions were not calculated ones to imply no value; rather, the omissions occurred because no composition course can be asked to do everything in a quarter or a semester.

Through this curriculum, students should gain experience using the composing process as well as a sense of confidence

that they can write, consciously making choices of kinds of techniques to use for differing contexts. As the contexts differ, as other situations call for written expression of ideas, students should be prepared to take in new information, to add to their storehouse of techniques, to make further wise choices of how to respond.

The final writing assignment of giving partial answers to the questions (Who am I? What have I learned?) can be accomplished two ways. Students can write two separate papers or a combination paper dealing with both questions at once. The paper(s) is to evidence a cumulative build of expository techniques just as the short story assignment evidenced the cumulative build of narrative techniques. Students must focus, find a central idea, create an organizational pattern, and use specific examples to illustrate their thoughts. In short, they must find that balance of rhetorical stance that allows them to convey their content to an acknowledged audience in an authentic voice.

The instructor gives students the following handouts and asks the class to take a few minutes to read them.

Who Am I?: Expository Assignment #4

"The deepest experience the soul can know - the birth of a baby, the prolonged illness or death of a loved one, the torturous pain or isolation of disease, the creation of a poem, a painting, a symphony, the grief of a fire, flood, an accident - each in its own way touches upon the roots of loneliness. In all these experiences we must perforce go alone."

Clark E. Moustakas

"Let there be loneliness, for where there is loneliness, there also is love, and where there is suffering, there is also joy."

Clark E. Moustakas

Because we are individuals, each of us is at times separated from all others. In what ways can separation from others enrich our lives? Is time alone as necessary for growth as time with others?

Is our awareness of our ultimate aloneness a key to our need to love and be loved? Loneliness has been said to be the living experience which is most like death. What determines whether loneliness is the destructive element it is often seen to be or whether it is a positive force which encourages life?

"I just don't believe that most people are living the smooth, controlled, trouble-free existence...their words suggest. Today never hands me the same thing twice and I believe that for most people...life is a mixture of unsolved problems, ambiguous victories, and vague defeats -- with very few moments of clear peace...Just when I think I have learned the way to live, life changes and I am left the same as I began... My struggle with today is worthwhile, but it is a struggle nonetheless and one which I will never finish."

Hugh Prather

"Life is not a spectacle or a feast; it is a predicament."

George Santayana

"To be a full human being...one has to abandon altogether the search for security and reach out to the risk of living with open arms. One has to embrace the world like a lover. One has to accept pain as a condition of existence...to court doubt and darkness as the cost of living..."

Morris West

No one who thinks before s/he speaks will say that life is easy. No one who has grown will tell you that growth is painless. But each person must choose between two alternatives: to seek life, attempting to make the best of situations and her/himself or to reject life, committing mental or physical suicide. What encourages an individual to struggle and grow toward her/his best self? Why do some people give up?

If today you were offered a third alternative of a conflict-free existence dependent upon your agreement to remain at your present level of maturity, would you accept the offer? Would there be any significant loss in no longer engaging in struggle as a requisite for living?

"There is something inside of me
and I don't know what it is.
It may be a song...a building
...a prayer. There is something
inside of me and it is good."

Dean Walley

Your life costs a great deal. People suffer because of you... you suffer from your own mistakes and your own sense of right. You take up space; you cost money and time and energy. Are you worth your price? How do you measure the value of your existence? What qualities do you see in yourself that convince you that your life is worth living, no matter what the cost?¹¹

¹¹ Bell and Shaffer, pp. 156-57.

What Have I Learned? Expository Assignment #5

"I am a human being, whatever that may be.
I speak for all of us who move and think
and feel and whom time consumes.

I speak as an individual unique in a
universe beyond my understanding, and
I speak for man.

I am hemmed in by my limitations of sense
and mind and body, of place and time and
circumstances, some of which I know but
most of which I do not. I am like a man
journeying through a forest, aware of
occasional glints of light overhead, with
recollections of the long trail I have
already traveled, and conscious of wider
spaces ahead.

I want to see more clearly where I have
been and where I am going, and above all
I want to know why I am where I am and why
I am traveling at all."

N.J. Berrill

This assignment is your opportunity "to see more clearly
where you have been." Education is a process which changes the
learner; it is the vehicle in which s/he travels. What have
you learned? How have you changed? Where are you traveling
next?

"You say the script is written?

I say it isn't.

You say the roles have been assigned, the sets designed, the lines memorized, the make-up applied, and we must play our parts as best we can?

I disagree.

You say it is too late for change, and that the only strength is to endure silently, to choke back the pain and keep on smiling?

No, we must refuse to go on with that kind of deadly show. Man has not exhausted the possibilities of what may transpire on the barest, empty stage! Let us reassign the roles. Strike the sets. Throw away the old lines. Take cold cream and tissues and remove the make-up. There is still time to begin again: where are those new young playwrights?"

Malcolm Boyd¹²

¹² Bell and Shaffer, p. 160.

Though the set-up of the handouts is similar to the diagnostic writing assignments, there is no necessity for using any quotation or any question on the handouts. They are two additional outside sources the students may use if they so choose. The assignment is simply put to students, "Using what you know of life and of writing, respond to the two questions."

During the class period following the giving of the assignment, students will participate in an activator designed to stimulate their thinking. This activator takes a great deal of time for an instructor to prepare. It is advantageous for a group of composition teachers to work together to present this activator.

The two questions that comprise the assignment call for a recognition of universal connections that all people share because all are part of the human condition. One means of reflecting many aspects of the human condition is to create an All-Man Environment, a room filled with pictures, bits of written sayings, pieces of art work, a continuous tape of music, all of which attempt to present the positive and negative potentials of humanity. Pictures and sayings can be combined in collage designs on bulletin boards and taped on walls, screens, table tops, and chalk boards. Photographs from back issues of feature magazines and color advertisements make two

sources of free materials -- the more divergent the materials the better.

Following is a handout given to students before they enter the All-Man Environment. Prior to experiencing the activator, students know the final writing assignment so they have the framework questions in mind. They should be instructed to look for juxtapositions within the Environment that will lead them to more complex thinking than the simple relating of picture to directly associated saying that they are accustomed to seeing on posters.

Everywhere is love
 lovemaking..weddings and babies
 from generation, to...
 and continuing.

Everywhere the sun, moon
 and stars, the climate
 and weathers have meaning
 for people.

Though meanings vary,
 We are all alike
 countries and tribes...and
 trying to read what sky, land
 and sea say to us.

Like and ever alike we are on
 all continents in the
 need of love, food, clothing,
 work, speech, worship, sleep,
 games, dancing, fun.

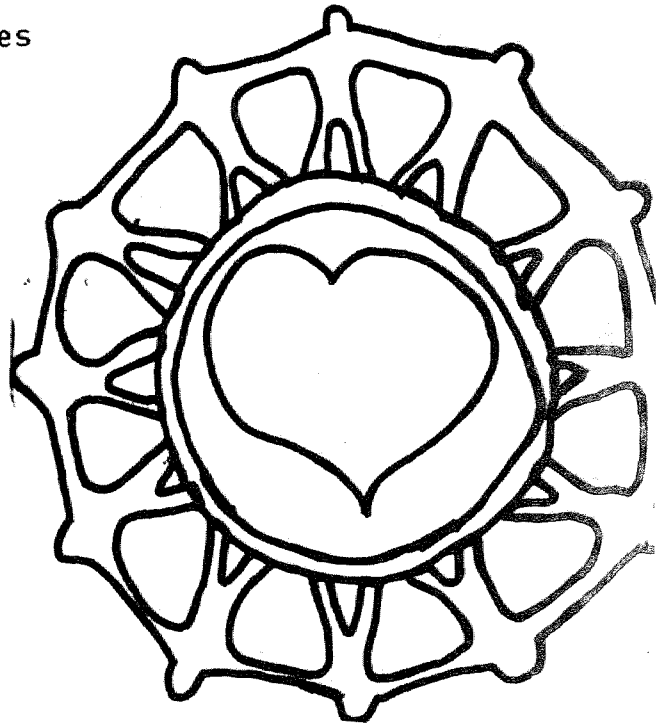
From tropics to arctics
 humanity lives with
 these needs so alike,

So inexorably
 alike.

-Carl Sandburg

Today you will be experiencing an environment - an ALL MAN Environment. Spend the class period experiencing - not just looking, but seeing; not just listening, but hearing; not just having sensations, but feeling. As you are experiencing, write down some reactions. In particular, respond to the following.

1. Find at least ten ways you are like other people.
2. Find five ways you are different.
3. In response to the quote on the door, what is the "hope worth sustaining?"



If the activator has fulfilled its purpose, students will see a gap between what they know and what they need to know to answer the questions they are addressing. They will also be stimulated to discover their own partial answers.

Students need time to think, to reflect, to write. During the interim between the giving of the assignment and its due date (ten days is a suggested time period), the instructor can utilize class time in two ways: 1. Evaluating representative papers done for the same assignment, 2. Holding workshop sessions during which students may work on drafts with time to confer with both the instructor and classmates.

When students present their papers, they can do so in small group evaluative sessions or they can present their papers to the entire class. Though time-consuming, there is an advantage to the latter in that students will have the opportunity to hear every paper. Whichever form of presentation is used, students should lead their own evaluative discussions. As a means of reinforcing the kind of participation needed to make the sessions successful, the instructor gives students the following excerpt from Lou Kelly's book, From Dialogue to Discourse. (Final drafts of the papers are due before the end of the grading period. The students can make revisions after receiving feedback from the class and after receiving the instructor's written comments; students include the revisions in their cumulative folders for the end-of-term evaluation.)

Handout for Sharing of Expository Assignments #4 and #5

If you watch the reactions of others as you speak or as they read or listen to what you have written, if you hear what people say in response to your ideas, you do not need a grade to tell you how great or how rotten your performance is; you do not need an official "instrument" of evaluation to point out the ways you should improve. The reactions of your audience will tell you whether you delighted or bored them. Whether you informed or confused them, whether you persuaded or alienated them, should be evident.

Feeding that information back to the interior you, where your mind and emotions can act upon it, using that information to help you develop new skills and insights, is your best source for self-correction and growth. Learning from that kind of feedback, from classmates and teacher, is one of the most involving and pervasive ways to learn.

But it may not be the easiest way. Sometimes it may be quite painful. Negative reactions from classmates can seem far more devastating than a low grade from a teacher. That is why an open class cannot be without respect. Not the kind traditionally bestowed upon those among us who enjoy the social status that "merits" respect, nor those who "deserve" honor and esteem because of their achievements, nor those in authority over us who "demand" our respect because we fear what they can do to us. But the kind described by Erich Fromm:

...respect denotes, in accordance with the root of the word, the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his individuality and uniqueness.

In an open class that kind of respect, that kind of seeing, is not the sole responsibility of the teacher. For the open class is a community of learners. This kind of learning that takes place in an open classroom brings confidence in self and a sense of community with the people from whom feedback is derived. And it generates response-ability.¹³

¹³ Adapted from Kelly's From Dialogue to Discourse, Chap. 7.

Four Representative Papers: Final Assignments

WHO AM I?

(In Reponse to "Who Am I?")

The opening description makes use of narrative techniques for easing the reader into the paper. You present a meaningful metaphor that you make use of in latter parts of the paper.

As I walked with dignity out into the fresh, crisp night, I looked up into the endless sky. Endless in the way of no limits, no boundaries. It was like a diamond mine. The sparkling objects were stationed in certain places as if someone had placed them there.

fragment--
connect to the previous sentence
by means of a comma.

I continued staring; my eyes couldn't move. They were attracted by a great magnet. Without shifting my lenses, I slowly sat down upon the cool blades of grass. Extending my arms behind me as a brace, I sighed. I straightened out my legs as I continued to be hypnotized by the bright lights above.

emphatic!
gaze is accurate.

While journeying in my deep sense of thought, I began to notice the beauty of the things around me. But I also noticed how everything seemed to fit in place, like everything was meant to be right where it was. But where do I belong? Where is my place in society? Then it came to me, I won't find a place in society until I find myself.

The lines of interior monologue are effective.

Being in the situation and atmosphere I am presently in, the most important step in finding myself is an honest knowledge of who I am, where I came from, and where I am going. I must not lose my sense of blackness. It is not difficult to be black at Malcolm X College or at Howard or Morehouse. Black is beautiful because everyone there is black. It's much more difficult to be black at Harvard or Yale or Drake.

The use of first person plural pronoun is an effective means of identifying you with the other members of your race.

If this is a direct quotation, you must give credit to the source.
"We can run but we can't hide." On the whole, black Americans have come almost unanimously to an agreement with this statement. We have found that we can run but we cannot

hide. For years, we black people tried to run from our blackness. We ran from it by trying to imitate whites in dress and looks. We straightened our hair, we wore the "right" clothes, we used the "right" words. But we still were black. We tried to run by outperforming whites. We felt that getting better grades in school might do it. We felt that accomplishing more on the production line might do it. We felt that moving to a proper suburb might do it. We felt that by denying and criticizing our brothers we could do it. But all we ever found was that we can run but we can't hide.

The repetition of phrasing you use gives emphasis to the continual process of trying to please.

Today, I am beginning to learn the secret of success, the secret in finding myself, my own identity, and where I fit in society. I am at the point where I can stand on my two feet and look at myself. In the privacy of my own home or on public streets, I can look at myself and say, "I'm black. My people were black. Some of my ancestors were slaves. Some of my ancestors were chiefs. Some of my ancestors were thieves. My people did what they had to. I am not ashamed of my black ancestors. I am not ashamed of my color. I'm not ashamed of myself." I have reached the point where there is no more apologizing. The constant striving to measure myself by white standards is out. I'm finding a freedom to be myself. I have found my own identity.

This section flows like further developed by illustrating more specifically by what standards you now measure yourself. What is your identity?

This is an important self reminder. You make the reader understand that you don't wish to be identified solely by a racial tag.

But I must remember - I must not let blackness become a sanctuary or my identity will be lost. The clothes, the songs, the black studies, the music, the poems, the rapping black - these are just symbols. The substance is my proud and free moving forward in the twentieth century. My revolution is my finally being free to pursue my personal goals and to secure the dignity of my manhood - to be myself and have my own place in society.

--Ernest Newborn

IF ONLY I WERE. . .

He built the colorful blocks higher and higher until they collapsed. He loved to relax with the small pieces of wood. They seemed to take away thoughts of everything.

The others laughed at his short haircut. His ears stuck out from his head. They called him "Dumbo" and giggled at his comical appearance. He pretended along with them, playing like it didn't bother him. It was only a joke.

He had trouble reading aloud when told to do so. He stumbled over the words, trying to spit out the sounds. Embarrassment filled his body and overflowed as he tried to finish the assignment. Why couldn't he be like the others?

Riding her bicycle away from school, she felt the crisp, cooling air brush against her face. She pedaled as fast as her legs could go until they felt like lead weights. She was tired but relieved that her day was over.

She looked in her mirror and saw a young, growing face with all the characteristics of a teen-age girl. It overwhelmed her to the point of paranoia. Everyone looked at her blemishes and straight, oily hair. She didn't fit into stylish clothes because she was overweight. She was too uncoordinated to make the cheerleading squad.

She glared at the mirror again. She wanted to be grown up. Her parents treated her like a child by establishing curfews and rules to obey. If only she could be an adult.

He liked to be alone at times like this. Friday nights were fun times for a lot of people. Some of his friends partied together but he usually wasn't up for that sort of thing.

He did things when he was alone that he wouldn't have done with others. Everyone has his own way of getting away from it all. If he wanted to get stoned, it was for a reason - he did have problems.

Grades were a problem. He studied a lot and attended classes fairly regularly. He only missed when he was hung over from the night before. The professors were just working against him, not even giving him the benefit of the doubt.

Girls never flipped over him, but he wasn't bad looking. He did get turned down for dates a lot. His personality just didn't attract them. Someday they would come around, he knew.

People would like him if he were out of school and settled in a job. Two more years until graduation. . .

She waded through a pile of laundry scattered around the small room. The basket was dumped by a screaming child who needed to be changed.

She reached the little boy at the other side of the room and calmed him. She took a minute to play with him and remembered the soup boiling on the stove. She hurried to attend to lunch, for her other children would soon be arriving home from school.

The television blared in the background as the phone rang. She quickly dried suds off her hands to find she had missed a P.T.A. meeting.

With grocery list in hand, she asked, "Why me?"

He slowly climbed the stairs to his third floor apartment. His creaking body barely made it up the dark stairs each day. It got harder and harder each time he had to do it.

He unloaded a small brown bag to empty cupboards and proceeded to make supper. He set a place at the table and scanned the guide for an interesting show.

The crackling of meat and bubbling of liquid were intensified within the quiet surroundings.

He ate with the six o'clock news that night. It was good to hear them talk. He glanced away from the box to a picture above. If only he were young again.

--Deborah Ganzel

Debbie, you might think the absence of comments throughout your paper implies disinterest or misunderstanding. Neither reaction is true. I am intrigued; I read again and again.

At first I was going to say, "Wait a minute, this is a narrative." Then I looked again to see that you, indeed, utilize almost solely narrative techniques, but in a manner that makes them subordinate to the overall idea of wishing for other lifestyles -- not in the time-based format of a story. I was going to say, "You do not make connections between the separate examples." Then I looked again to see that the "If only..." phrasing acts almost as a refrain. I was going to say, "This doesn't say anything about your answer to 'Who Am I?'" Then I looked again to see that the paper is a sophisticated response that doesn't need actual experience to point out that you have recognized a side yearning that is at times part of us all.

Nice job, lady.

WHAT I AM LEARNING

(In Response to "What Have I Learned?")

STAGE ONE - I DISCOVER MYSELF

See stove. Touch stove. Burn fingers. No more touching stove. Smell food. Eat food. Good food. Stomach full. See mirror. Look into mirror. See face. See hair. See myself.

The extremely simple sentences are meaningful ways to have form support content. The

STAGE TWO - I DISCOVER OTHERS

I am hungry. I want to eat. I am fed. I burn my fingers. I have a Bandaid put on my fingers. I am sleepy. I am fed warm milk and rocked to sleep. I am not alone.

sentence complexity grows as you grow. Next idea!

The passive voice in some sentences indicates that you were being cared for by others.

STAGE THREE - I LEARN FRIENDSHIP

I am playing blocks with another child. The child smiles and laughs. I also smile and laugh. I feel happy playing with the child. The child leaves. I look forward to seeing my friend again.

must be capitalized -- it is a brand name,

STAGE FOUR - THE BASICS OF COMMUNICATION

I see my parents. They make noises. Other old people also make noises. The T.V. makes noises. The radio makes noises. Ma-ma. Da-da. My name is Vern, and I can talk.

STAGE FIVE - I EXPRESS MYSELF ON PAPER

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U
V W X Y Z. Stop. Go. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10.
See Spot run. Go, Spot, go. I can write.

STAGE SIX - I COMMUNICATE IDEAS

I live in Marion, Iowa. There's an old man down the street that gives me cookies and candy if I am nice to him. I can run really fast. I can ride a bike, too. Sometimes I

You need the personal pronoun here.

These seem more like recognitions of places and physical activities rather than the communicating of ideas.

can see the stars out of my bedroom window at night. If I throw rocks at a squirrel, it chirps at me from up in its tree. I got a "B" in spelling last week. My grandma is coming to our house this weekend.

STAGE SEVEN - I TAKE STANDS

I think I could figure out anything if I thought about it long enough. I want to buy a pair of jeans. I think that the North Vietnamese are really rotten. We should drop a bomb on them. My dad is a Republican. I want to be a Republican when I grow up because I like Nixon. I hope I do good on my history test. I studied hard for it.

The word choice here reinforces that the kid

STAGE EIGHT - I INTERPRET *is still present.*

The specific example helps to illustrate the process of interpretation. You might use other examples besides one book.

I just finished reading Catch-22. I really got into that book. It exposed the frustration and ridiculous rules and regulations that a soldier must go through in the service and remain sane. Toward the end of the book, I could see that Yossarian (the main character) was losing some of his sanity. I could tell this was happening through the distorted style and the descriptions of some of the crazy things that he (Yossarian) was doing.

STAGE NINE - I EXPLORE ABSTRACTS

Part 1. There's a song they have been playing on the radio that really set me to thinking about myself. It goes like this:

I'm being followed by a moonshadow--
Leaping and hopping on a moonshadow.
And if I ever lose my legs, I won't
have to walk no more.
And if I ever lose my eyes, I won't
have to cry no more.

I started thinking about all the stupid things I get upset about, and how ridiculous they really are. It makes no sense to be pessimistic

because once something has happened, there is no sense in taking a negative outlook on the next related event to come along.

Part 2. I was in church a few weeks ago for a change, and the priest related a passage from the New Testament. It was from Matthew, I believe. "You will listen, but not understand. You will look but not see. Because the people's minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and closed their eyes." I went home. Sat down. Fixed myself a ham and cheese sandwich, hold the mustard. And I thought. *The purposeful* What did that mean? Had I been missing the *sentence* whole point of everything? Then I got deep. *fragments* What am I doing here? What is my purpose? I *work,* thought about my surroundings. The population is growing. People care about a smaller number of other people. They lock doors against neighbors, and don't turn their backs to friends. They don't hear the passages. They don't see the love. And I am a person, just like they all are.

STAGE TEN - I GRASP CONCEPTS

I understand Newton's laws of gravity. I have read Frost, Hemingway, Castaneda, and Guth. I know how an internal combustion engine works. I realize the impact of fluorocarbons on the ozone layer. I comprehend the functions of a linear equation. I perceive acceptance, rejection, and indifference. I suspect conspiracy. I have discovered love. I am acquainted with pain, anguish, joy, and anger. And I am enlightened constantly by religion and nature.

STAGE ELEVEN - I FIND MYSELF

I am sitting on a rock in the geometric center of my universe.

--Vern Balster

Vern, yes indeed -- you have learned; you are learning; you will learn. May I say that I will miss doing that learning together next quarter? I have so liked knowing you and growing with you.

EXPERIMENTATION:

A SHORT BOOK TO MYSELF
(Combination Paper)

Dedication

I am puzzled. who is Myrddin?
To Myrddin, who all my short life has been
helping me to discover myself.

PROLOGUE

*This is a
meaningful
prologue
for every
person
who has
ever
considered
the two
questions
of our
assignment.*

Inside every person there are as many experiences
to be shared, successes to reveal, and dreams
to unfold as there are secrets to be kept,
memories to hold dear, and failures to forget.

Chapter I

When I was in second grade, I wanted to
be a nightclub singer so that I could wear a
black sparkly gown like my Barbie doll had.
Somehow it never occurred to me that nightclub
singers had to know more than "Jesus Loves
Me." (I actually used to dream of myself
before a large admiring audience, tenderly
singing, "Jesus loves me, yes I know, for the
Bible tells me so.") By seventh grade, I
could hardly wait until I got to college so
that I could play pranks, stay out late, and
do what I wanted just like my mother had. It
was never apparent to me that I had a full six
more years to wait.

*I recognize
that you are
focusing on
the aspect
of
aspirations,
but it seems
like your
early years
get short
shift. It's
an abrupt
jump from
second
grade to
seventh
grade.*

Chapter II

Six years later, I have more moderate
aspirations. If, when I graduate, I can get
by as a mediocre graphic artist, I will be
happy. Perhaps I will even go past mediocre
and on into pretty good. But even at this
point, my dreams won't stop.

To work in the illustration area for a
publisher of children's books would be quite

comfortable. Having my own shop where I could sell my art work and some antiques is an interesting possibility. I would like to eventually go back to Europe, spend more than one day on the Rhine, and stay overnight in a real castle. Like everyone else, I want to get married someday; I won't say to whom.

Chapter III

Beyond the chapters themselves acting as an organizing principle, I'm having trouble sensing the connections between one described incident and the next.

I can still recall the day I found out I'd won the poetry contest. I had worked for weeks before on poems and long narratives that were possibilities for entries, and then my teacher and I had finally narrowed the field to one short poem. As I entered the English room, Mr. Morrison pushed an envelope to me. It had my name typed neatly on the front. "Read this," he said.

The class was quiet as I ripped the paper open. The envelope fell unnoticed to the desk as I began to read. My eyes scanned down the list of unknown names. Wait! There was my name, in bold type, under Honorable Mention, with Mr. Morrison's name right below.

I didn't know what to say. (Does anyone ^{Necessary?} ever?) Then, as debonair as D'artagne, Mr. Morrison laughed aloud and leaned back in his seat, his hands behind his head. I looked at him and suddenly realized I'd done it; we'd done it.

Chapter IV

"You sure make a nice-looking pair," says Judy as she gazes at the picture on my wall. Yes, Judy. I think so, too, but he doesn't. It would be nice, though. Imagine a little house in the country (preferably Victorian with gingerbread, a tower and stained glass), two cats and maybe a dog (big and huggable), antiques and rugs, apple pies and bread fresh-baked on Saturday, church on Sunday and picnics with wine and cheese in the summer. Plants

and rustic furniture filling the rooms. Pewter on the table. Rocking chairs and everything as white as brightness. Then in a few years two children, or maybe three...

Chapter V

Who's fooling whom? We all know it's not like this. *Ah, yes! my dad once told me that the difference between youth and old age is that in youth, Chapter VI you still believe that your dreams can come true,*

I'll never forget that autumn afternoon. No one was in the house except my grandfather and me. He was downstairs attaching brass decorations to the old chairs in the dining room, while I was upstairs writing to my friends in Pennsylvania. Then I heard a husky voice call up to me, "Come down here, Cheryl. I need your help." I was so perturbed that he dare bother me and ask me to drop everything that I angrily replied, "I'm coming!" and clumped downstairs.

He sat alone in the empty room with the chairs and his tools. I edged over and began putting in my share on the tedious work. I fumed inside, my letters went unanswered, and the rays of sun soon lowered below the horizon. We passed the time in relative silence. *This incident is so clearly described I can sense the emotions as my own.*

Then just before five o'clock, Poppop managed to say in a low, proud voice, "When you're grown and have kids of your own, tell them how you and your Poppop spent a quiet afternoon putting in nails."

I remember *quite to eliminate confusion -* clearly thinking that Poppop would never leave. He'd always be around; he always had...

Outside, the autumn trees glowed red in the late sunlight. The last rays sunk behind the horizon, and, by December, he was dead. *Beautiful phrasing in this section -*

Chapter VII

"The hidden things will lead me on beyond the mountains to find the sea, above the clouds to see the sun, and somewhere within myself I will discover truth." *credit?*

Chapter VIII

I am still looking for it.

Chapter IX

awkward phrasing
Like anyone, there are many things in my life that mean a lot to me. My sister Barbara, my parents, my religion, my grandmother, the house where I was born, my old friends, my new friends, my art, my likes and dislikes, books, my life. This is not necessarily the end of the list, nor are all these things important

in this order. *The listing itself doesn't tell (show) much about you. The detailed incidents of* Chapter X *rather than chapters reveal much more. You might consider something like this*

Many things are happening inside my head. *or developing* I am forming opinions that will most likely be *incidents* mine for the rest of my life. (I hate cubism *and situations* and the music of Barry White; I love medieval castles and Paris.) I am learning to accept *that will illustrate the* things. (People will never appreciate their *importance to* freedom.) I am finding from others what it is *you* like to be understanding. (Karen listens to *things and* me even in my worst of down moods.) I am *the people* learning. I am growing. I am expanding. *in the list,* Inside me there are tens of millions of bits of trivia that I could share with you, but would you care to listen? *You have shared; I have listened, and I don't consider the experiences shared as* Chapter XI *"bits of trivia."*

How can I tell you who I am when I don't even know myself?

--Cheryl Madera

That's the haunting thing about self-identity -- there's always more to know. The process of finding partial answers is never ending.

Whether by preference or by necessity, teachers of composition tend to be pragmatists. Our response to any new theory is most likely to be: What does it imply for our teaching? What specific classroom procedures does it suggest? Are these procedures practical? Will they work for the sort of students we have in our classes? Underlying these questions is at least one major assumption: our primary obligation is to have some influence on the way students compose, to make a difference in students' ability to use written language to give order and meaning to their experience.

As though this obligation were not demanding enough, I would like to argue that we have at least one other responsibility. We must not only influence our students' writing, but also help refine and shape the discourse theory that will guide our work with students. In addition to being teachers, we should also function as discourse theorists and researchers. As we try to fulfill this new obligation, we will need to ask new kinds of questions. Is a given theory valid? Does it do justice to the complexities (and the simplicities) of the writing we see every day? Are the theory's assumptions borne out in writing done by our students?¹⁴

This passage from Odell is here included in its entirety because it reinforces the need for the wedding of theory and practice that was expressed four chapters ago as a beginning to the discussion of this design. Odell asks that each teacher

¹⁴ Lee Odell, "Teachers of Composition and Needed Research in Discourse Theory," College Composition and Communication, 30 (1979), 39.

of composition act as theorist and researcher in her/his field. Theorizing is a complex process which can operate at many levels. This theorist/researcher presents no startling revelations which could be expected to alter the essential structure of her discipline. The curriculum design represents an effort to synthesize intellectual understandings and personal experience in the crafting of a product which can be useful to others who are doing their own thinking about the teaching of composition. The design makes implications for teaching, suggests specific classroom procedures, attempting to show their practicality. The representative papers stand as evidence that the design works for students. The primary goal of the design matches Odell's primary obligation: "...to have some influence on the way students compose, to make a difference in students' ability to use written language to give order and meaning to their experience."

The final writing assignment severely tests the power of this design in terms of its primary goal. It asks that students recognize and respond in writing to the universal within the personal and the personal in that which stretches beyond the self.

Chapter V: Conclusion

"And What [We] Saw Was Good"

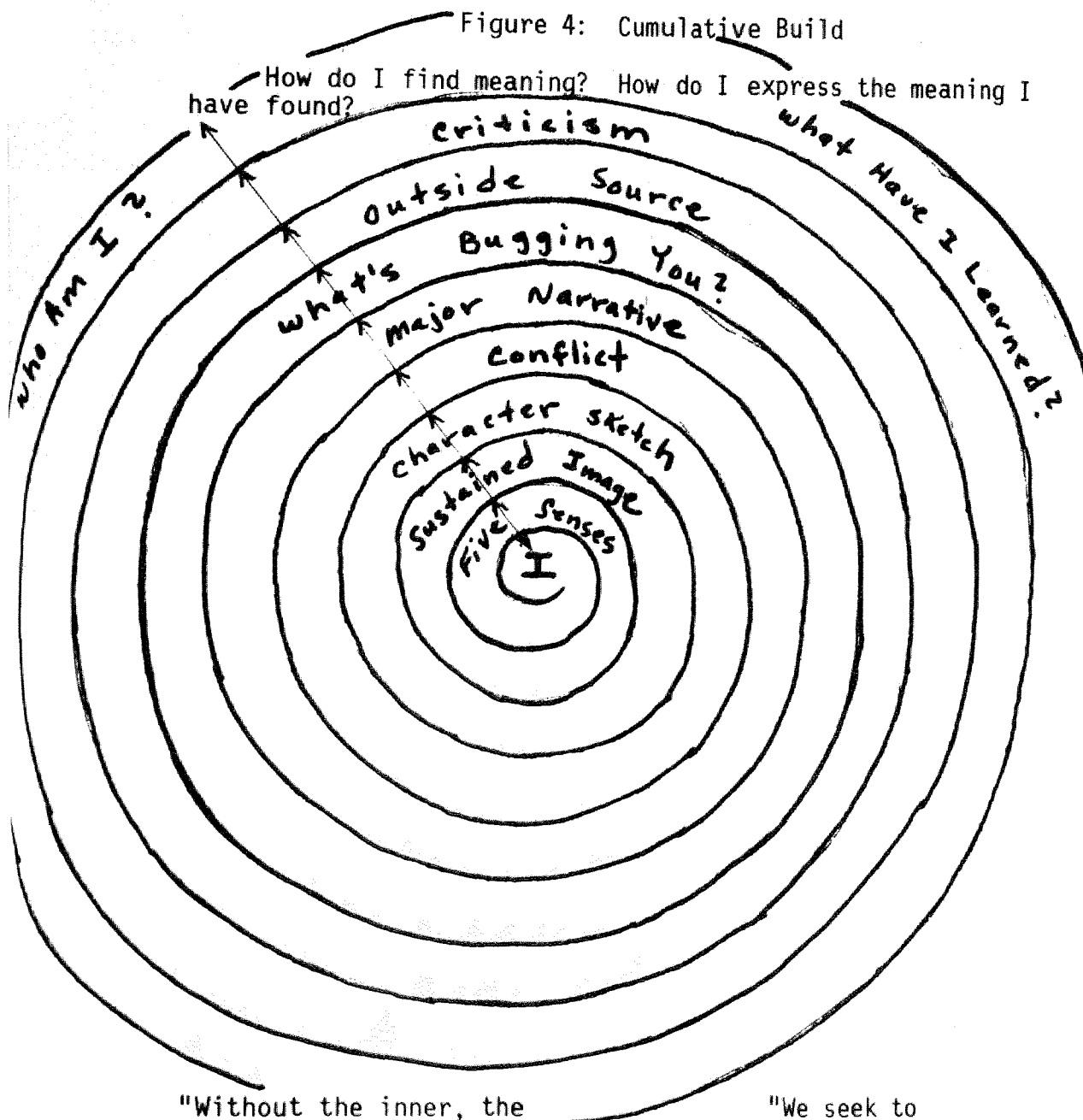
Just as teachers need to think and rethink where they have been and where they are going, students too can profit from this kind of vision as they near closure of a learning sequence. The writer of this curriculum drew upon Bruner's knowledge of structure at the beginning of this design; she draws from him again for its ending: "At its best a learning episode reflects what has gone before it and permits one to generalize beyond it."¹ The very doing of something helps one to understand it, and so does looking back at what one has done.

The looking back involves three activities for students:

1. a final class discussion, 2. a final self-evaluation, and
3. a final course evaluation. The instructor asks students to build with her/him a graphic representation of where they have been in the learning sequence.

¹ Jerome Bruner, The Process of Education (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1963), p. 49.

Figure 4: Cumulative Build



"Without the inner, the
outer loses its meaning;
without the outer, the
inner loses its substance."

R. D. Laing

"We seek to
linguistically give
order out of the
chaos of experience."

James E. Miller, Jr.

The following questions can be the basis for the discussion:

1. What two questions comprise the meaning framework? (When students answer, the instructor places the questions above the spiral.)
2. How do you find meaning?
3. What various ways do you know for expressing meaning in a written format?
4. What guides your choices of techniques?
5. What do the two quotes suggest to you about the process of invention?
6. Why do you think the arrows move outward on the spiral? In particular, why does an arrow connect "I" with "What's Bugging You?"
7. How might you use what you have learned when you encounter problems and events outside of a classroom or in classrooms later in your education?

The discussion reminds students once again of the importance of understanding the fundamental structure of any course they take, the understanding of which is a minimum requirement for using the knowledge gained. "The teaching and learning of structure, rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques, is at the center of the classic problem of transfer."²

At the end of the discussion period, the instructor gives students the following self-evaluation handout and asks them to return it in their folders when they are handed in for the final instructor evaluation. The self-assigned grade is not

² Bruner, The Process of Education, p. 12.

binding for the instructor, but provides one more perspective on personal performance that s/he uses in determining the student's overall grade for the course. Although the self-assigned grade is not necessarily the given one, it is of value to note that over the four year period of the use of this design, there was an eighty percent agreement factor between self-assigned and instructor-assigned grades. The remaining twenty percent split evenly: ten percent of the self-assigned grades being one level higher and ten percent being one level lower than grades assigned by the instructor.

Self Evaluation Sheet

1. In what ways do you think you have grown since the beginning of the quarter?
2. What do you consider to be your major strengths as a writer?
3. In what areas do you feel you still have weaknesses which need work?
4. Evaluate your own contributions as a member of a learning community. Have you openly shared ideas in large group? Have you been a helpful evaluator of others' work?
5. Considering your own answers to the above four questions, your attendance record, your attempts at revision (both in the rough draft stage and after receiving verbal and written comments), indicate what letter grade you think you honestly deserve.

Additional comments:

Name _____

Peter Elbow, author of Writing Without Teachers, has experimented with and endorsed the teacherless writing class. Within this curriculum, the class is teacher-full as students and instructor play both roles of teacher and learner; but the decision to use this design, the plans for utilizing class time, and the overall assigning of student grades are the responsibilities of the instructor. S/he should also be evaluated in terms of performance and wisdom in curricular choices. Self-evaluation and department evaluation are key means of determining how well curricular goals have been met; equally important is the student's evaluation of the course itself and of its instructor.

In vogue is a variety of computerized course evaluations that often use ranking procedures. The mean scores give teachers little usable feedback in terms of specific comments and suggestions for changes. The following class and instructor evaluation sheet can be used in place of or in addition to other evaluation forms. If the instructor thinks responses will be biased by student concern for a grade not yet known or the grade being known, students can respond to the evaluation questions during the last meeting of the class prior to receiving their folders in which final grades have already been recorded.

CLASS AND INSTRUCTOR

EVALUATION SHEET

Name _____

(You do not have
to sign your name
if you choose not
to.)

It is easy to learn what is easy to teach.

It is easy to teach what is easy to learn.

But how learn, how teach, the hard stuff?

How teach how to think a new thought? How to dream with vision? How to care and not to care? How to love? How to free? How to center? How to respond, to be responsible? How gaily transfigures all that dread? How teach the logical and psychological processes that the best learners learned? How teach, consciously, how to consciously learn? And learn to learn? And, consciously, grow by learning? How does a teacher differ from no teacher?

1. What do you consider to be the specific strengths of this course, of its instructor?
2. In what specific ways do you think the course could be improved, the instructor's approach and/or methods could be improved?

A teacher makes difficult things a little easier, and easy things a little more difficult.

1. What things did you find to be difficult in this course?
2. In what ways did the instructor aid you or fail to aid you?

And it is the teacher who creates environments that permit learning.

1. What kind of learning environment was created in class? Were we a helpful community of learners?
2. What suggestions would you make to improve the interaction in small group evaluation sessions, in large group sessions?

Sometimes it's necessary to travel a long distance to go a short way correctly. The student learns by going where to go. He learns on his own.

1. What have you learned?
 2. What do you wish you would have learned that was not included in the course?
-

Any additional comments?

³ Quotations from Terry Borton's Reach, Touch and Teach (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970).

In the introduction to this design, the practice of prescription was discussed as a negative constraint for students experimenting with the composing process. There are those who will say that this design is a prescription because it defines a structure students will use to fulfill certain assignments. Any time structure is imposed, the structurer may be charged with limiting freedom through the use of dogma. "Dogma" is not a pejorative term; the important questions to be asked are as follows: Does an instructor recognize dogma? Does s/he adhere to a certain body of tenets? For what ends?

For dogma is the anatomy of thought.
 As scientists tell you, even a bad
 doctrine is better than none at all.
 You can test it, differ from it, your
 mind has something to bite on. You
 need the rock to plant the lighthouse.⁴

No one teaches composition without a "rock" of some kind; those who decide to try this one are encouraged to "bite," to accept or reject parts or the whole of this curriculum, and to share with the designer the results of their experimenting. The roles of theorist, researcher, and teacher are better fulfilled by all if ideas are shared.

⁴ Cary, p. 58.

How do I find meaning? How do I share the meaning I have found? This marks the end of one composition teacher's efforts to share her discoveries with others. But, as one writer who experienced this curriculum recognized, the patterning of words upon paper is only a beginning.

GENESIS

In the beginning, I created a paper. The paper was blank and without form, but the spirit of writing was going through my head, and my creation began. I wrote letters and they became words, and what I saw was good. I wrote words and they became sentences, and what I saw was good. I wrote sentences and they became paragraphs, and what I saw was good. At this point I had created my world, but there was still disorder. I revised and polished, and what I saw was good. Today I had played God.

Time passed, and I sat and looked hard at my creation. I wasn't happy with what I read. In the beginning what I had created seemed good, but things were wrong now. There wasn't a title, and pronoun agreement wasn't quite right. Transitions were needed, and I was telling, not showing. Worst of all, my punctuation needed work.

As I looked through my creation, there was one good paragraph I could use. So I took it out and destroyed the rest of it. With this one paragraph, I started on my new creation. Before I was finished, I had done much changing and erasing, but soon things seemed to fall back into place. The form was good, and above all my punctuation improved tremendously over

the last paper. The final copy was written in ink as a promise that it would never be erased.

Then I took my creation to class with me and shared it with the rest. It gave them insight into who I am, what I had experienced, and how I felt about things. I also listened to their creations and found out who they were, what they had experienced, and how they felt about things. When we were done sharing our worlds with each other, we handed them in to the teacher. She read them, and what she saw was good.

--Debbie Both

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